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HISTORICAL ABERDEEN

The Castle and the Castle-Hill

The Snow Church

The Woolmanhill and Neighbourhood

The Guestrow

Historical Aberdeen

THE CASTLE AND THE CASTLE-HILL

THE SNOW CHURCH

THE WOOLMANHILL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

THE GUESTROW

BY

G. M. FRASER

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

ABERDEEN

WILLIAM SMITH, THE BON-ACCORD PRESS

1905

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INTRODUCTORY.

IN a former volume, "The Green and its Story," some idea was given of the interest that attaches to the older quarters of Aberdeen in both a philosophical and historical sense. In the present volume the scope of the work has been extended so as to include two particular edifices as well as certain localities. The Castle of Aberdeen and the Snow Church have long since passed away, but, partly on that very account, it seems advisable to preserve a record of their interesting, often stimulating, history.

The method and purpose of the work ought to become clear from the text itself. They may be stated here very briefly. The method is to follow the history of an institution, or locality, in some considerable detail, in order that, if possible, we may get at the actual life-story, which, of course, is just as real in the case of a street as in a person. Such a method seems necessary if we are to have anything more than a record of external, unrelated facts, and such a

Introductory.

method, as formerly observed, is hardly possible in an ordinary history. The purpose of the work is the two-fold one of stating the facts of history, always on the best accessible authorities, and showing the remarkable richness of the city and neighbourhood in historical memories. These are a priceless heritage that ought to be drawn upon more and more, not, indeed, to foster any narrow provincial spirit, but rather to give savour to social and national life. For it is always to be remembered that what is true of Aberdeen, in a historical sense, is equally true, in the main, of other Scottish burghs, where the communities took part in the same national events, were oppressed, or ameliorated, by similar laws, were visited by the same scourges, had often precisely similar institutions, and struggled towards better things exactly as in Aberdeen. Naturally, the distinctive character of the population is reflected in movements and conditions, and this quality in the history of events it is the merest duty of the recorder to endeavour to conserve.

Two of the papers in this volume, "The Snow Church" and "The Guestrow," appeared, in substantially their present form, in the *Aberdeen Free Press*, to the proprietors of which acknowledgment is made for permission to reproduce. Acknowledgment is made also to the proprietors of the *Aberdeen*

Introductory.

Journal for the use of the block of Gordon's map of Aberdeen, which forms the frontispiece ; also, to Mr. W. F. Webster, Chanonry, for the use of his photograph of the Snow Churchyard, and to Mr. Alexander Walker, merchant, for permission to reproduce the Old Grammar School view, formerly the property of his father, the late Mr. Alexander Walker, LL.D.

G. M. FRASER.

November, 1905.

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THE CASTLE AND
THE CASTLE-HILL

THE CASTLE AND THE CASTLE-HILL.

I.

THE story of Aberdeen Castle and the Castle-hill is, to a very large extent, the story of the early burgh. Indeed, if we could pierce the darkness that envelops the earlier centuries, we should doubtless find the hamlet, from which the city took its rise, nestling, from the earliest days, at the base of the hill on which the stronghold came to be built.

This, however, is no place in which to enter on the vexing subject of the prehistoric settlement. In the period immediately prior to the twelfth century, the rude dwellings of the town seem to have clustered on the high ground, west of the Castle-hill, where the market square and the Town House afterwards appear ; also, along the slope to the south of the Castle-hill, in the neighbourhood of the harbour ; while the huts that formed the separate village of *Futty*—now erroneously named *Footdee*—also lay under the shelter of the Castle-hill, but somewhat further to the eastward. Aberdeen was then partly a fishing town, partly trading, carrying on its business almost wholly by sea, and its situation was obviously determined not only by the protection afforded by the

Castle, but mainly, and increasingly, by the conveniences of trade.

For Aberdeen, from a very early date, had a considerable shipping trade, even with the Continent. In the reign of Edward I., of England, a ship belonging to Aberdeen, under the charge of Thomas Ker, John of Aberdeen, and Walter de la Botha, all merchants of the town, was attacked near Yarmouth while on a voyage from Aberdeen to St. Omer, by a party of Englishmen belonging to Winchelsea, who carried off $56\frac{1}{2}$ sacks of wool, $5\frac{1}{2}$ "dacles" of ox hides, and much other merchandise, besides "evil-entreating" the owners and their servants. The Aberdonians applied to the English King for redress, and Edward ordered the return of the pirated property without delay.* In 1314, a few years after the incident just related, the cargo of a ship of Lynn, captured by certain Low Country merchants while on a voyage from France to Perth with provisions for the English garrison, was brought to Aberdeen, as a commercial centre, and there sold.† We know that part of the provisions of King Edward's armies, in Edward's repeated invasions of Scotland, invariably consisted of dried fish from Aberdeen;‡ and a fair

* Calender of Documents, Scotland, II., p. 2.

† Ibid. III., p. 29. Kennedy states that Aberdeen was known in Norway as a trading centre in 1153. Annals I., p. 14.

‡ Dr. Joseph Robertson has sought to show—Book of Bon-Accord, app., p. 346—that *Habberdine* fish in the old records did not mean Aberdeen fish, but was a Dutch name for dried

indication of the volume of trade of the town in those days is seen in the fact that in 1330 the customs of Aberdeen were—next to those of Berwick-on-Tweed, which, naturally, occupied a specially favourable situation for trade, and enjoyed exceptional commercial privileges—considerably larger than those of any other Scottish town.*

Aberdeen was, then, quite a trading centre as early as the twelfth century, and as the maritime interest was the most important it was a chief consideration for the early burghers to have their dwellings and stores as near the lading and landing place as possible. As the little burgh grew, and became a centre of importance for the neighbouring district, and the means of inland communication improved, the town naturally increased in those directions in which it was

cod. Dr. Robertson, one cannot help suspecting, must have been speaking quizzingly. In any event, there can be no doubt at all that Aberdeen fish was meant. “*Piscibus de Aberdene*,” “*Piscium de Abberdene*,” and “*pisce duro veniente de Aberdene*” (this in itself absolutely conclusive) are common entries in King Edward’s Wardrobe Accounts; on the other hand, “*Haberdene*” is found clearly applied to the town of Aberdeen, apart altogether from any question of dried fish. See Calendar of Documents—Scotland, I., pp. 139; 184; 189; II., pp. 315, etc.

* In that year the customs of Aberdeen amounted to £484, Edinburgh, £400; Perth, £88; Dundee, £85. The customs of Berwick, although that town was so exceptionally well situated, and had the right of dues on all shipping that passed and repassed between the two kingdoms, amounted to just £86 more than those of Aberdeen. Scott. Berwick-on-Tweed: History of the Town and Guild, p. 48.

approached from the landward side. And so the earliest streets of which we have any record are Shiprow, (properly, Ship-rue or Ship Street,) leading from the harbour ; the Castle-gait, or road to the Castle ; the Green, or Green-gait, the entry from the south and west ; the Gallow-gait, or road to the Gallows-hill, outside the town, which became the highway from the north ; and the two kirk roads—Upper Kirk-gait and the Nether Kirk-gait, leading to the church, which, dedicated to St. Nicholas, the patron saint of this as of many another seaboard town, stood on practically the same spot as the East and West Churches occupy to-day.

The first documentary evidence that has come down to us of the existence of the burgh occurs in a charter granted by David I., the “sair sanct for the Crown,” to the clerics of the Abbey of Deer, “apud Aberdeon,” not later than the year 1134.* A few years later the seat of the bishop was removed from Mortlach to Old Aberdeen, and from about that date charters and other authoritative documents relating to

* Book of Deer. Sp. Club. Quite recently—in Sir A. C. Lawrie’s Early Scottish Charters—p. 220—doubts have been thrown on the authenticity of the Book of Deer, and on the existence of a Monastery at Deer prior to the twelfth century. It is not unlikely that, on its discovery, the importance of the Book of Deer was over-rated. Sir Archibald cannot be said, however, to have as yet proved his case ; and, in any event, his suggestion that the Manuscript was the work of “an Irishman, one of the secular clergy, serving at Aberdour or Deer in the twelfth century,” does not affect the validity of the statement that a charter was granted at Aberdeen in 1134.

the burgh become comparatively numerous. About 1180 the burghers of Aberdeen obtained their first charter—from William the Lion, granting to the burgesses of Aberdeen and others, north of the “Munth,” certain trading privileges under the name of their free “Hanse.”* William himself resided in Aberdeen about that time, and his interest in the community was shown by his granting a second charter, also dealing with trading privileges, 1187-1203.† In 1211, William is again in Aberdeen, and bestows his “palace” and garden on the Trinity Friars, although a royal residence appears to have been retained in the burgh down to, at least, 1332, for in that year David II., in a grant to Sir John Somerville of his palatium in the Green, expressly states that this grant shall not prejudice the right of the Constable to the king’s residence in the town on the occasion of a tournament.‡

The date of the earliest Castle on the Castle-hill is as difficult a problem as that of the foundation of

* Original in Burgh Charter Room. Quoted in Anderson’s Charters and other Writs, pp. 3-4. It is conjectured that a combination then existed of the burghs north of the Grampians—“called by the name of ‘Hanse,’ a name so well known afterwards in connection with the great European combination of free cities.” Cosmo Innes’ Lectures on Scotch Legal Antiquities, pp. 113-4. South of the Grampians burghal affairs were largely regulated by the Court of the Four Burghs (Edinburgh, Berwick, Roxburgh, Stirling), which ultimately developed into the Convention of Royal Burghs.

† Original as above. Quoted, Anderson, p. 4.

‡ Book of Bon-Accord, p. xiii.

the town. We only reach firm ground in this matter in the last half of the thirteenth century, but there can be no doubt that a castle stood on the hill before that time. In 1264, however, a sum of five merks was paid from the national treasury to the chaplain of the Castle of Aberdeen;* and in the same year twenty merks was paid to Ricardus Cementarius, otherwise, Richard the Mason, afterwards a Baillie in the town, for certain repairs executed on the Castle.† A few years afterwards the light shed on the subject becomes much more clear. From November, 1290, till it was yielded to the puppet, Baliol, in 1292, the Castle of Aberdeen was held for Edward I., of England, along with Dunnottar, by John de Guildeforde, whose salary was one merk per day, the same as that of the Castellan of Edinburgh.‡ In 1292, King Edward, at Berwick-on-Tweed, issued his mandate to the keepers of twenty-three castles in Scotland, held by English garrisons, to deliver these strongholds into the hands of John Baliol, whom he had adjudged to be the next heir of Margaret, in the succession to the kingdom, and to his “beloved and trusty John de Guildeforde, keeper of the Castles of

* Exchequer Rolls of Scotland, I., p. 12.

† Ibid., p. 12.

‡ The receipts granted by Guildeforde for his salary run usually in this form—On 11th April, 1292, he acknowledges receipt of £33 6s. 8d. from “William de Melgdom, Sheriff of Aberdene, on account of the custody of the Castles of Aberdene and Kincardine.” Calendar of Documents—Scotland, I., pp. 252; 289-90; 311; 353-4, etc.

Aberdeen and Kincardine," he duly communicates his will that these castles—"with all pertinents"—be yielded accordingly.

In the year 1296, King Edward himself, that redoubtable "hammer of the Scots," was in the town. It was his third visit to Scotland, but his first to the burgh of Aberdeen, and in approaching it he travelled by Glenbervie and Durris (then a manor and property of importance), and so to Aberdeen, which he entered on Saturday, 14th July. There he found, says the contemporary chronicle, a good castle and a good town—"bone chastelle et bone ville sur la meer."* Edward stayed five days in Aberdeen, and in the course of that time, that is, on Tuesday, 17th July, he received the formal, grudging submission of the citizens. In the course of those few days, too, he had the satisfaction of having brought to him "his enemy, Sir Thomas Markham, whom Sir Hugo de St. John took, and eleven others in arms with him,"† and we may be very sure that soon thereafter the

* Record of Edward's journey. Hist. Docs.—Scotland, II., p. 29. Reproduced from the French Archives in Gough's Itinerary of King Edward the First, II., p. 281. Gough, however, has the following translation of the above phrase—"a faire castell, and a good towne," and this may have misled Dr. Cramond, who, in his interesting "Records of Elgin" (New Sp. Club), I., p. 9, says with reference to King Edward's tour—"Of all the castles on the route through Scotland, the chronicler designates that of Elgin alone as 'good.' Aberdeen has a 'faire castell,' and St. Andrews and Montrose have each simply 'a castell.'" The text of the chronicle is quite clear.

† Calendar of Documents—Scotland, II., p. 29.

burghers of Aberdeen had an opportunity of seeing how swiftly the great king could execute judgment on his foes.

A still more notable capture, at the same time, was that of John Baliol, erstwhile King of Scotland, and his son, Edward Baliol, who had been residing in Aberdeen prior to King Edward's visit, but fled on his approach. They were led captive to Edward, and warded in the Castle of Montrose, after suffering the indignities with which the common histories of the period have made us familiar.*

Blind Harry tells us that Wallace, in 1297, attempted to take the Castle of Aberdeen, but it is extremely doubtful, to say the least, if Wallace ever was in Aberdeen at all. Aberdeen had not even the honour of being one of the towns to which the limbs of the patriot were sent, to be exposed, after his execution.† With Robert Bruce it was different. He took refuge, and resided in the town on more

* *Fordun. Scotichronicon.* Ed. by W. F. Skene, I., p. 326; II., p. 320.

† A popular Aberdeen tradition, which often finds its way into print, tells that one of Wallace's limbs was exposed in the town, and the star, to be seen to this day near the east gate of the Oldmachar Cathedral burying-ground, marked the spot where a patriotic priest had the limb interred. But the official record of the sentence on Wallace—25th August, 1305—leaves no room for doubt on the point. Wallace's head is to be put up on London Bridge, one of his limbs to be exposed at Newcastle-on-Tyne, another at Berwick-on-Tweed, a third at Stirling, and the fourth at Perth. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edwards I. and II.* I., p. 142.



Arms of Aberdeen (Seventeenth Century).

This representation of the Armorial Bearings of Aberdeen was used by Raban, Aberdeen's first printer, and the other early printers of the town in the seventeenth century. It will be noticed that the leopards are full-faced, and their tails pass downwards; whereas, in the arms certified by the Lyon King in 1883, now in use, the heads are in profile and the tails erect.

than one occasion, from that first visit in 1306, when, worn and dispirited after the defeat of Methven, he lay for some time in the town, until discovered by his enemies, and driven to the hills.

And now we come to that remarkable episode, the taking of Aberdeen Castle for Robert the Bruce, with the help of the citizens, about which there has been much bewilderment for the last sixty years. One approaches the discussion of this part of the subject with great reluctance, not merely on account of the difficulty of dealing effectively with all the points in a tradition that goes back six centuries, but also because it is necessary, in connection with it, to deal with certain defects in the work of Dr. Joseph Robertson, one of the most accomplished, and, in general, one of the most reliable historical writers that the north-east of Scotland has produced. Dr. Robertson, however, in assailing the tradition relative to the taking of Aberdeen Castle—and assailing it, to this extent, so successfully that the whole matter has since been in a state of chaos—proceeded mainly on an error.

For many years the accepted tradition, which ran through current histories of the city, and delighted the hearts of Aberdonians for many a day, was that after Bruce's victory over the English at Barra, near Oldmeldrum, in May, 1308, the citizens of Aberdeen, who had warmly espoused Bruce's cause, made a gallant attack on the Castle and put the English garrison to the sword, that their watchword on that occasion was "Bon-Accord," and that, in virtue of

this timely and effective help, King Robert granted the citizens permission to change the ancient armorial bearings of the town and to assume the present arms, with the still familiar motto, "Bon-Accord."* Such was the story, and a story that, in all its parts, was demonstrably untrue. Dr. Robertson was the first to see its weak points, but dealt with it as a whole, and, as already said, proceeded on an error, with the result that even ordinarily well-informed people are in doubt as to what to believe.†

Now, Joseph Robertson, as all who have gone carefully through his work must be well aware, had a curious antipathy to two historians. One was Hector Boece (1470-1556), historian of Scotland, and the other was William Kennedy, historian of Aberdeen. His attitude towards both is an attitude of uncompromising hostility. Historically speaking, it was, of course, very largely justified, for in both he found abundance of error that must have jarred on him exceedingly, although from Kennedy, indeed, he quoted largely in his own work—often with, but frequently without, acknowledgment. As, then, it is precisely Boece's and Kennedy's treatment of this story of the taking of the Castle of Aberdeen that he assails, this circumstance ought, at the outset, to be carefully noted. In dealing, as briefly as may be, with this part of the subject, it will accordingly be necessary to

* For a fair specimen of the current version of the story see Kennedy, *Annals*, I., p. 25.

† For Dr. Robertson's treatment of the subject see Book of Bon-Accord (1839), pp. 31-36, and app., 349-50.

consider, first, Robertson's treatment of it, and, secondly, the actual historical facts, and the view that may intelligently be held.

How, then, does Joseph Robertson deal with the story as related by Boece and Kennedy? He narrates the familiar story—firstly, the storming of the Castle by the citizens of Aberdeen, secondly, their use of the watchword, "Bon-Accord" on the occasion, and, thirdly, the granting of arms to the burgh by Robert the Bruce, as a reward of the citizens' valour. And he goes on to declare that "it is all a clumsy and ill-devised falsehood," narrated by Hector Boece, and by him alone, a person who had been called "the father of lies," who had been "declared 'infamous' by the High Court of History," whose evidence was to be refused even if offered only in corroboration of an occurrence, and much more so "when it is offered as the sole proofs."* Stronger statements were surely never used by a serious historical writer. Naturally, he goes on to assail certain parts of the story he so attributes to Hector Boece, and from that draws his sweeping conclusions, as above.

Now, it seems almost incredible, but it is the fact, that Hector Boece makes no statement of the kind attributed to him by Joseph Robertson. He tells indeed, of the taking of Castle of Aberdeen by the Bruce party and the citizens, and his statements on that head remain untouched by Joseph Robertson's strictures, but nowhere does he make the slightest reference to the story of "Bon-Accord," or the

* Book of Bon-Accord, pp. 33-4.

granting of new armorial bearings to the town. Here is the actual story of Boece:—

“About the same time the partisans of Bruce, greatly assisted by the citizens of Aberdeen, take by storm the Castle of Aberdeen, which had, to the great disadvantage of the Scots, been held for several years by the English. They put to death those who had been appointed its garrison. Shortly after, in order to leave no place of refuge for the English in Aberdeen, they remove all the fittings and level the Castle with the ground. The English, deeply moved by the sad news of the loss of the Castle and the death of their countrymen, assemble their forces and move towards Aberdeen, eager to avenge the loss they had sustained. When these tidings reached Aberdeen, the supporters of Bruce, along with the citizens, at once marched forth to join battle with the enemy. John Fraser, commander of Bruce’s army in Aberdeen, inflamed his followers with such ardour that they seemed to be advancing, not so much to battle as to certain victory. A fiercely contested battle ensued. Victory at length (though bought with much bloodshed), declared for the Scots. Of the English, the great majority were slain, very few being taken alive. Small bodies only escaped here and there, so obstinate was their resistance. It was the wish of the victors to hang their prisoners on a fork-shaped gallows, outside the town, but the canons forbade this. They also obtained the permission of Fraser and the provost of the town to bury the bodies of the slain Englishmen at the postern gate of the Church of St. Nicholas. There, to this day, may be seen in testimony of what I say, their bones along with inscriptions.” Boetii. Murthlac. et Aberd. Epis. Vit. Edited and translated by James Moir, LL.D. New Sp. Club. pp. 16-17.

Nothing, it will be seen, appears there, and nothing appears elsewhere in Boece, with regard to “Bon-

Accord," or the grant of arms. Joseph Robertson not only erred, therefore, at the foundation of his case, but he followed the extremely uncritical method of attributing to a historical writer statements which the writer never made, and then, having demolished certain of these statements, he concluded that he had disposed of that writer's whole narrative, and so completely disposed of the tradition.

With regard to Kennedy, Joseph Robertson had an easier case, although it so happens that he was not aware of the total sum of Kennedy's error. Kennedy does, indeed, tell the story of the watchword, "Bon-Accord," and of the grant of arms, and the strange thing is that for some unaccountable reason he went out of his way to incorporate in his *Annals of Aberdeen* a spurious and incorrect copy of the patent authorising the use of the present arms of the city, in which the story of "Bon-Accord" and the granting of arms is duly narrated,* whereas the story is not told in the genuine document still preserved in the Corporation Charter Room.† Kennedy did not, of course, interpolate the reference; that was done more than a hundred years before his time; but he culpably adopted the spurious patent when all the time he must have been well aware, having a better knowledge than anyone else in his day of the contents of the

* The spurious document is quoted—*Annals*, I., p. 25 n.

† A correct copy of the genuine patent, and a plate emblazonment of the arms will be found in Mr. Anderson's *Charters and Other Writs*, pp. 380-1.

Charter Room, that the genuine document was lying at his hand.*

It will now be sufficiently evident that this whole matter has got into an almost hopeless tangle, and that it is necessary to go back beyond Robertson, and Kennedy, and minor historical writers who dealt with the episode before their time, in order to get at the clear historical facts, or to find out with the closest regard to truth what actually did occur. In following out this process, however, one thing must be borne in mind, namely, that it is not possible, in such a matter, to prove all the circumstances with such definite certainty as one would be entitled to expect with regard to any episode that occurred within full historical times. The paucity of contemporary records, the lapse of time, and the entire absence of archaeological evidence all make necessary the application of some measure of what Professor Ramsay so aptly designates the trained historical imagination in order to get at a right understanding of this interesting, but far distant, occurrence.†

To begin with, then, it is quite clear that in the early days of Bruce's struggles the Castle of Aberdeen was held by an English garrison. So much is abun-

* Kennedy was employed to make up an index of the Burgh Registers, which he did in two volumes, and received from the Town Council £231 for his work. It was while so engaged that he gathered his materials for his *Annals of Aberdeen*.

† See, on this subject, Professor Ramsay's most suggestive paper on "The Book as an early Christian Symbol"—*Expositor*, March, 1905.

dantly proved by the official records, some of which have already been quoted. In the next place, it is equally certain that the Castle of Aberdeen was taken, for Bruce, soon after the victory of Barra, in 1308. We have already seen how circumstantially the story of the taking of the Castle by the Bruce forces and the citizens is narrated by Boece.* But we have also the more valuable testimony of a contemporary writer, Barbour, who tells of the clearance of the whole Aberdeen district by the Bruce's forces, so that not a single man was left north of the Grampians that did not own the Bruce's sway.† Then we have unimpeachable evidence that as soon as news could reach him after the Battle of Barra the English king received at Windsor tidings that his garrison in the Castle of Aberdeen was in the utmost straits, and on 10th July he issued orders to his admiral, William le Betour, to collect ships and men at Hartlepool, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Berwick-on-Tweed, and other places, and proceed—"to the postponement of all other concerns"—to assist in raising the siege of the Castle.‡ But the orders were never acted on, for before William le Betour had time to do anything in

* *Supra.* p. 12.

† "Sa that benorth the Month ware nane
That tha ne war his men ilkane"—*The Brus.*

‡ Rotuli Scot. I., p. 55. Infra, pp. 26-7. Quoted in Cruickshank's *Armorial Ensigns*, app. K. See, also, Kennedy, *Annals*, I., p. 26 (where, however, there is a serious error), and *Book of Bon-Accord*, p. 34.

the matter the Castle of Aberdeen had fallen, and its English garrison destroyed.

To carry the inquiry a stage further, it cannot be doubted—and it is, of course, a point of special significance—that in the campaign that included the taking of the Castle of Aberdeen, Bruce was specially helped by the citizens of the town. We have seen what Boece says on the subject, and he is supported by this fact, that as soon as he was in a position to do so, Bruce specially acknowledged those services by granting various charters to the community, in which he conferred on the citizens very special rights and privileges. This matter has not hitherto received the attention it deserves, but it is necessary in a special inquiry like the present that this should be kept in view. Bruce granted considerable favours to the burghs of Scotland, but to none did he grant anything like the rights and privileges he conferred on Aberdeen, and this can only be explained on the ground of his acknowledgment of special services. To Inverness, for example, which had four charters from William the Lion, twice as many as Aberdeen had from that monarch, Bruce granted, and as late as 1325, a precept to the Sheriff in favour of the burgesses against any who should invade their trading privileges.* From the royal burghs of Elgin, Forres, and Nairn the Bruce actually took away the liberties in making these burghs subject to his nephew, Thomas Ranulph, by the charter conferring on him the

* Mackenzie. *Guide to Inverness: Historical, Descriptive, and Pictorial*, p. 15.

Earldom of Moray.* To Perth, then a capital city, the Bruce paid attention on two occasions—first, in the early part of his career, when he initiated the partial restoration of St. John's Church, and secondly, when he is said to have dismantled the Castle.†

The burgh of Haddington, that favourite residence of the Scottish kings, had only one charter from the Bruce, confirming the burgesses in their trading rights, and granting certain extensions of the same.‡ Dundee received at the hands of Bruce—the appointment of a Commission, in 1325, to inquire into its ancient burghal rights in respect that the Burgh Registers had been abstracted by the English when in possession of the town; and, secondly, two years afterwards, a charter, following on the report of the Commission, confirming the ancient trading rights and liberties of the burgh.§ Ayr, although a very ancient town, holding its foundation charter, like Aberdeen, from William the Lion, and although its Friars

* Cosmo Innes. *Lectures on Scotch Legal Antiquities*, pp. 116-7 *n.* Dr. Cramond. *The Records of Elgin*. I., p. 11.

† Cowan. *The Ancient Capital of Scotland*. I., pp. 41; 69.

‡ Wallace. *Charters and Writs concerning the Royal Burgh of Haddington*, p. 1.

§ Charters, Writs, and other Public Documents of the Royal Burgh of Dundee. Printed by order of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council, pp. 8-11. Mr. Hay, formerly Town Clerk of Dundee, in his extremely interesting “Ancient Dundee and its Progress,” speaks of this as the earliest charter extant of any burgh in Scotland. At that time, however (1886), the Scottish burghs had not carried so far as now the excellent work of reproducing the chief contents of their archives.

Preachers got grants from the Bruce, holds no charter from that king as a burgh. Edinburgh had two charters from the Bruce—one, 1327-9, confirming the foundation charter to the Abbey of Holyrood, and, secondly, in 1329, a charter confirming the burgesses in the possession of their burgh, with the port of Leith, and other appurtenances.*

This, then, shows the relations of Robert the Bruce towards the Scottish burghs in general. With regard to Aberdeen, the relations are oddly exceptional. He gives his first charter to the burgh in 1313, granting to the burgesses the custody of his forest of Stocket, near the town, under certain restrictions. In 1319 he grants the burgesses of Aberdeen a second charter, giving them the right to change an annual fair. In the same year, 1319, he grants them a third, and, in some respects, their most important charter, bestowing on them, in feu, the burgh and the forest of Stocket, to be held for ever in fee and heritage and free burgage, with the mills, waters, fishings, petty customs, tolls, and all other rights and liberties, on payment of a nominal feu duty of £213 6s. 8d., Scots. In 1323 Bruce granted to the citizens a fourth charter, relieving them of the payment of certain duties on ale and fish. In 1329-30 he issued letters patent, confirming the burgesses in all their former privileges, freeing them from certain exactions outside the burgh, and granting them power to punish all who carried arms in the burgh. In the same year, he

* Sir J. D. Marwick. *Charters and other Documents relating to the City of Edinburgh*, pp. 14-15.

issued further letters patent, re-affirming former concessions, and freeing the burgesses from all exactions outwith or within the burgh ; and he appears to have granted a further charter, now lost, relative to the burgh fishings.* We leave out of account altogether grants to the Bishop, to the Chapter and College of Canons of the Church of Aberdeen, and the remarkable grant, in 1326, of a sum of £13 6s. 8d. annually for ten years from the royal treasury to partly indemnify the burgh for a fire that occurred in that year.

Now, it may with considerable fairness be said that all this might only prove that Aberdeen has been more fortunate than other burghs in the preservation of its charters, and not that its treatment by the Bruce was exceptional. That, however, is not so, and for three reasons. In the first place, the other burghs have succeeded, just as well as Aberdeen, in preserving earlier charters than those of the Bruce. Secondly, the missing charters of the Bruce and his immediate successors on the throne have been very fully tabulated, and out of 662 such charters granted by Bruce only seven relate to burghs, viz. :—One charter each to Aberdeen, Ayr, Crail, Haddington, Irving, Jedworth (?), and Peebles.† Thirdly, the quality of the charters, as well as the number, granted to Aberdeen was quite exceptional. This is shown particularly in the grant

* Of the above, the originals are still preserved in the Corporation Charter Room, with the exception of the charter relative to the fishings. They are reproduced in Anderson's *Charters and other Writs*, pp. 10-16.

† See Robertson's *Index of Missing Charters*, pp. 1-29.

of the forest of Stocket. The grant of a forest was in those days “the most extensive and the most privileged then in use,”* and Aberdeen was the only burgh in Scotland that obtained such a grant. Indeed, it can hardly be doubted that to this grant are due the present freedom and prosperity of the city. For it so happened that in the year 1493 it saved the burgh from falling into the hands of an over-lord. In that year the noted Scottish Admiral, Sir Andrew Wood, who was a bosom friend of James IV., received from that monarch a grant of the Castle-hill and the royal forest of Stocket. How that grant came to be made no one can tell.† But the manner in which the Town Council and community of that day rallied in defence of their heritage and liberties is one of the most honourable incidents in the whole history of the town. Sir Andrew sailed northward with his two ships to take possession of his new property. But long ere he reached the town, the citizens had been

* Cosmo Innes. *Lectures on Scotch Legal Antiquities*, p. 33. Of course, the word “forest” does not mean a wood, but waste lands, moor, etc. The distinction is still retained in the title of the Government Department of Woods *and* Forests.

† Sir Andrew was a favourite courtier and gaming companion of the King, to the extent of lending him money when James was unfortunate in his play. It would be curious if it should turn out that the grant of Aberdeen property was but the payment of a gambling debt. The following entry in the Treasurer’s Accounts is curious—“That samyn nycht that Andro Wod lent to the King to the cartis xiiij French crowns and five ducats ; summa [repaid] xiiij £, xiiij s. vi d.” Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer (1497) I., p. 375.

summoned by handbell, and with one voice—"ayfaldly," is the old expressive word—they solemnly pledged themselves, not merely to provide the funds necessary to defend their rights before the highest court, but to take arms, if need be, even against the King.* And so Sir Andrew Wood, instead of quietly taking possession, had to return home, while the case was carried before the Privy Council of Scotland, and there debated, King James on the one side and the burghers of Aberdeen on the other, and the latter, producing the precious document still preserved in the Charter Room, obtained the Privy Council's unanimous decision that the subjects in dispute were the inalienable right of the burgh by virtue of this charter of the Bruce.† For Aberdeen, the special significance of the decision lies in this that had the decision been in favour of Sir Andrew Wood's claim, Aberdeen in all probability would have sunk into the degraded position of a mere burgh of barony, dependent for its liberties and developement on the caprice of its superior.‡

All this, then, shows the special rights and privileges granted by Robert the Bruce to the citizens of Aberdeen, and, all things considered, may be taken as corroboration of the statement of Hector Boece that the burghers were of special assistance to him in his campaign in the north, and in the taking of the castle.

* Extracts from the Council Register (Sp. Club) I., p. 52.

† Privy Council Register (1497).

‡ See on this interesting point, the legal view of George Cadenhead—*The Aberdeen Burgh Territories*, pp. 16-17, and same paper, *Phlios. Soc. Trans.*, I., p. 73.

Just one other point may be noticed in reference to Boece's statement. The dispute between the burgh and Sir Andrew Wood lasted for several years, the decision of the Privy Council being given in 1497. Naturally, as the whole case for the burgh rested on the Bruce's charter, special attention would be directed, at the time, to the services rendered by the citizens to Bruce, and the Bruce's exceptional acknowledgment. Now, it was just three years after the Privy Council's decision was given that Hector Boece was appointed first Principal of King's College, and began his *Lives of the Bishops* in which the story of the taking of Aberdeen Castle appears, so it can hardly be doubted that he had the advantage of special inquiry in dealing with the episode, and for his narrative of which, as we have seen, he had very substantial grounds.

We come next to deal with the two further points—the reputed grant of arms by Robert the Bruce, and the use of “Bon-Accord” as the watch-word of the Aberdonians at the taking of the Castle. There can be no doubt that the story of the grant of arms is a myth—and it was the acumen Joseph Robertson displayed in disposing of this weak part of the familiar tradition that made it appear as if he had disposed of the whole matter. The arms of Aberdeen in use in the time of Bruce (which, of course, had nothing of “Bon-Accord” on them), continued to be the arms of Aberdeen for a century after Bruce's time.* So nothing more need be said on that head.

* A representation of the early coat of arms will be found in Cruickshank, *Armorial Ensigns*, p. 11. It appears for the last

With regard to the motto, “Bon-Accord,” however, the case is rather different. It appears for the first time—never to disappear—on a new seal obtained by the burgh in 1430.* But, so far, there is no record of this motto having been adopted on account of its having been the watchword at the taking of the Castle. The first intimation of that, strangely enough, comes from the outside. It is given in the heraldic work issued by Sir George Mackenzie—the “bluidy Mackenzie” of the Covenanting days—in 1680, where the story is interpolated in a copy of the patent of arms granted to the burgh by the Lyon King, in 1674, and this is the spurious document reproduced by William Kennedy, as already described. Where Sir George Mackenzie got the story has not as yet been discovered. One thing is clear—before the story became current in Edinburgh it must have been current in Aberdeen,† and it is just possible that, as Mackenzie held high political and judicial position in the Scottish capital, having been King’s Advocate and a Privy Councillor, and had access, in preparing his works, to the national repositories, he may have found the story put forward in some of the documents

time on 16th February, 1423-4, appended to the “Obligation” given by the burghs of Edinburgh, Perth, Aberdeen, and Dundee to Henry VI., of England, for payment of the ransom of James I. Calendar of Documents—Scotland, IV., p. 192.

* See a representation of this seal (1430), in Cruickshank, *Armorial Ensigns*, p. 17; and on the title-page of Kennedy’s *Annals*, vol. I.

† It is significant that Forbes, in the “Cantus” (1662-1666-1682), speaks familiarly of “The ancient city of Bon-Accord.”

connected with the new grant of arms to Aberdeen in 1430, when the motto, "Bon-Accord" was first assumed. However, that is a mere surmise. What is undoubted is that the burgh selected the motto at that date for some reason which would doubtless be stated in the official records of the burgh when application for a new grant of arms was decided on. Now, the Aberdeen Burgh Records are more complete than those of any other Scottish town, extending from 1398 to the present day with the exception of a single volume, but it so happens, most singularly, that the missing volume covers the period from 1414 to 1433, and is precisely the volume that would state the reasons that led the Town Council of that day to select "Bon-Accord" as the motto for the new coat of arms. It would not be at all surprising if that volume should yet be found in the national archives. In any event, taking all the known facts into account, it cannot be doubted that "Bon-Accord" was adopted in 1430 in virtue of a tradition that had existed among the Aberdonians that it had been the civic watchword on the occasion of the memorable struggle, and was now embodied on the arms of the town on the first occasion, since Bruce's day, on which any alteration in the town's arms had taken place.

The only point in the inquiry that remains to be dealt with is whether there is any good reason for believing that that tradition was well founded. We think there is. In the first place, only a century had elapsed since Bruce's death, and the grandchildren of those who took part in the storming of the castle might have been alive—certainly, the great-grand-



Jamesone's House, Schoolhill.

children, easily—in 1430, and a statement carried down so short a period would hardly be put on the low ground of a “tradition.” We are to-day considerably further from the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and it would appear quite absurd, even if we could disassociate from our minds the contemporary records, to speak of the story of that event as a tradition. Then it is very significant that “Bon-Accord” is French, for if a watchword was used at all it would have been in French. Norman French was the language of court and camp alike in Bruce’s day. The record of King Edward’s visit to the city at that very time, as we have already seen, is in French. The Deed of Homage by the citizens of Aberdeen, at the same date, is in French, and tells how the burgesses duly undertake to serve their lord the King of England “*bien é leaument contre totes gentz qui purront vivre é morir.*”* All these things are collectively of moment, and at least indicate that the tradition had probable cause. So that, pending the discovery of some document which shall put the question beyond a doubt, one may reasonably and intelligently hold that the citizens of Aberdeen did specially help the Bruce to retake the castle from “the auld enemies,” the English, and that there is good ground for the tradition, which has probably existed since Bruce’s day, that the watchword on the occasion was “Bon-Accord,” which has been for nearly five hundred years the cherished motto of the city.

*Calendar of Documents—Scotland. Reproduced in Anderson’s Charters, etc., p. 294, and Cruickshank’s Armorial Ensigns, p. 58.

THE CASTLE AND THE CASTLE-HILL.

II.

ONE passes with much relief from the region of controversy to substantial and well-authenticated fact. In the middle of 1308 the Castle of Aberdeen was stormed and taken for the Bruce. Edward II. received intimation, as we have already seen, that the garrison was sorely pressed ; and that king, making some show of carrying out his father's dying injunction relative to the subjugation of Scotland, issued from Windsor, in July of that year, the following instruction to William le Betour with reference to Aberdeen Castle :—

“ The King to his beloved William le Betour, Greeting. Whereas we are much in need, for our invasion of Scotland, both of sailors and of others, specially trusting in your diligence and faithfulness, we have appointed you captain of our navy at Hartlepool, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at Berwick-on-Tweed, and at other places between Hartlepool and Aberdeen, to assist in raising the siege of our Castle of Aberdeen,* and to take strong measures

* Kennedy, *Annals I.*, p. 26, mistakenly says this order was issued for the “re-taking” of the Castle. But Edward had evidently not yet received intimation that the Castle had fallen.

in all matters affecting in these ports our expedition against our hostile and rebellious Scots, as our beloved and trusty Gilbert Petche and our chamberlain in Scotland will more fully direct you on our behalf. And, therefore, we command you to attend to this in every respect, to the postponement of all other concerns. Moreover, we command all and sundry shipmasters and sailors to obey and assist you on our behalf by accompanying you with their ships and men, properly armed, to carry out the premises effectively and valiantly, and as often as you lead the said sailors for our defence.” *

Meantime, the Castle had been successfully stormed. It was the first Scottish stronghold in the campaign to be captured for the Bruce, and thus, after the Battle of Barra, its capture was the first of that long series of brilliant feats of arms that culminated in the victory of Bannockburn, in 1314. One would be glad to know how the tidings of that victory were received in Aberdeen, but in lack of absolute information it is interesting to think that at least a semblance of what occurred may be found in the tradition handed down by Hector Boece that “on the day on which the Battle of Bannockburn was fought and won, a horseman, in shining armour, suddenly appeared in the streets of Aberdeen and announced to the inhabitants the great victory which the Scots had achieved. The warrior was seen, as he passed northward, to spur his steed across the waters of the Pentland Firth ; and

* Cruickshank. *Armorial Ensigns (Text of Instruction)* pp. 83-4. Anderson. *Charters and Other Writs (Translation)*, p. 295.

the common belief was that the unearthly rider was no other than Saint Magnus."*

With the firm establishment of Bruce on the throne of Scotland, the citizens of Aberdeen enjoyed a period of repose. The fortress on the Castle-hill plays no more part in the history of the burgh—so completely, indeed, does it pass from history that this is, in itself, a corroboration of the current idea, so picturesquely rendered by Parson Gordon—

" That Castell, after it had stood ther for sumtyme, wes taken by the townsmen ; the Englishes, who held a garrisone ther, ather killit or chasit away ; and least at any tyme therafter it should prove a yock upon the townsmen's necks, they razed it to the ground, and in place theroff builded a chappell, which they dedicated (according to the fashion of the tymes) to St. Niniane, hoping that, by that meins, the hill being converted to a holy use, it wold be unlawfull for anyone to attempt to employ it agane to a profayne use any more."†

Although we hear no more in history of the Castle itself, the hereditary office of Warden of the Castle, otherwise Constable of Aberdeen, was con-

* View of the Diocese. p. 446, *n.* Mr. C. Elphinstone-Dalrymple, who suggested that this is simply an adaptation of the classical legend elaborated by Macaulay in "The Battle of Lake Regillus," has put the story into attractive verse, telling how the burghers of Aberdeen were drawing kirkward at the vesper hour—

" When lo ; Is that light the levin bright ?

 No, 'tis the shining form

 Of a mailed knight, on a war-steed white,

 That comes on the startled people's sight

 Like the gleam of the summer storm."

Lays, Highland and Lowland. 1885. pp. 3 *et seq.*

† Description of Bothe Touns, p. 13.

tinued for several centuries. This office was bestowed on Kennedy of Cermuck, or Kenmuck, in the parish of Ellon, while the Castle was still of consequence, and it was hereditary in the family of Kennedy till their lands and hereditary office alike passed to Sir John Forbes of Waterton, in 1669.* Although the Kennedys took no great part in the life of the burgh of which they held the nominal guardianship, they are remembered for some things. It was a Kennedy, the Constable of Aberdeen, who, in 1242, built on one of the hills of the town the chapel, which, dedicated to St. Katharine, gave to that eminence the name of St. Katharine's Hill. Then it is curious to recall that the still prevalent custom of wearing black clothes at funerals was probably first seen at the funeral of Kennedy, the Constable, in 1591. He was buried in St. Nicholas Church, and permission for the attendants at the funeral to wear black clothes on the occasion was granted by the Magistrates and Town Council on payment of ten pounds to the Master of Kirk and Bridge Works.†

The peace and quiet enjoyed by the Aberdonians during the greater part of Bruce's reign did not last

*In that year, the Scottish Parliament granted ratification to Sir John Forbes of Waterton of certain properties "together with the heritable office of constabulary of Aberdein, the haill privileges, liberties, profeits, commodities belonging to the said Office, together also with all and sindrie the teind sheaves, and of all and sindrie the lands of Carnmaux . . . upon the resignation of Jhone Kennedies, elder and younger, of Carnmuxe," etc. *Acts of Parliaments of Scotland*, VII., pp. 593-4.

† Kennedy. *Annals*, I., p. 182.

long after the Bruce's death. In 1326, three years before that event, the town suffered from a great fire, and in respect of this the burgesses were allowed a remit of twenty marks—£13 6s. 8d.—annually, for ten years, from the royal treasury.* In 1336 occurred the historic outbreak of fire, due to the malignity of the ancient foes. Sir Thomas Roscelyn, an English knight of repute, landed at Dunnottar, and joining his forces to those of William Mowbray, an English commander who was operating in the district, attacked Aberdeen. The citizens were defeated with great slaughter, but Roscelyn was killed, and in retaliation, King Edward, on his way south, set fire to the town.†

The appearance of the Castle-hill at that time must have been very much as it was described by Parson Gordon three centuries later—“sandie soyle, the top of it flatt, not much higher than the [Castle] street, the syde of it nearest the shore verie steepe, as all the gairdins of the [Castle] street are which overlook the haven.”‡ The land in the neighbourhood of the Castle-hill, like the other land within the town's Inner Marches, was apportioned into “crofts,” or sections, each of which came to have a distinctive name. Thus, in 1411, the adjacent crofts on the north side were the Galcroft, Fill-the-Cap, and the

*Exchequer Rolls of Scotland. I., pp. 60-1; 90; 155, etc.

†Exchequer Rolls of Scotland. I., preface, cxlvii.

‡Bothe Touns. p. 13. See, in reference to the little change in Aberdeen in those three centuries, Cadenhead, Burgh Territories, pp. 19-20.

Friars' Croft—the property of the Black Friars.* The names of the other crofts in those early days can only be guessed at, but the lands on the south of the Castle-hill, towards the harbour, on the east, towards the Links, and on the north, underwent comparatively little change prior to the sixteenth century.

In the reference quoted a moment ago as to the demolition of the Castle, mention is made of the chapel dedicated to St. Ninian. This building, which crowned the Castle-hill for centuries, stands out as one of the most interesting historical features of the locality. It was erected, as near as can be ascertained, about the year 1500. Relative to it the University of Aberdeen possesses a singularly interesting document, of date 1504, in which Robert Blinseile, burgess, endowed with his property in the Shiprow, "the chapel of St. Ninian newly built on the Castle-hill"—"noviter constructe super montem castri" †—reserving for himself, his son, Ninian Blinseile, and their heirs, the right of patronage to the same. This family of Blinseile, Blyndsele, or Blinsell, as it was then, and afterwards, variously spelt, has long passed out of being in the Aberdeen locality, but was for centuries of considerable note in the burgh. They owned property in various parts of the town, and as early as

* Chartulary of St. Nicholas. New Sp. Club, II., p. 157. An extremely interesting map, in which the Crofts are approximately set down, is appended to Mr. Anderson's *Charters and Other Writs*.

† For text of the document see Munro, *St. Ninian's, or the Chapel on the Castle-hill*, pp. 4-7.

1408, are found contributing towards national objects.* In 1398 one of the Blyndseles, like his contemporary, Provost Robert Davidson, who lost his life in the battle of Harlaw, in 1411, kept a tavern ; † but as a rule they were engaged in the weaving trade. All of them of whom anything is known appear to have been men of honourable standing in the community, with the single exception of Alexander Blinsell, who, for the murder of one of the poor men in St. Thomas's Hospital, was drowned at the quay-head in 1584. Robert Blinseile, who endowed the chapel on the Castle-hill in 1504, and lived in what is now known as Castle Terrace, was a leading merchant in Aberdeen, enjoying royal patronage, for we read in the accounts of the royal household that in 1494 he sold to His Majesty twelve ells and a half of satin "for to be to the King a doublet," at the price of four pounds twelve.‡

Like many another enterprising Aberdonian in those days, he carried on a considerable trade in the Low Countries, through the agency of Andrew Halyburton, Conservator of the Privileges of the Scottish Nation in the Netherlands, 1492-1503, in whose

* In that year Thomas Blyndsele and his wife both contribute towards the expense of the embassy to England. Anderson. Charters, etc. p. 313.

† His tavern was evidently patronised by the authorities. Thus, the burgh treasurer's accounts state—"Item, dat. domino Roberto de Erskyn in taberna . . . Blyndsele pro vino IX. s." Mis. Sp. Club. V., p. 39.

‡ Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer. I., p. 223.

instructive "Ledger" will be found entries of many items of business done for Robert Blinseile, in Aberdeen wool, salmon, and "fynans."* In 1482-3 he was Provost of Aberdeen, a devout man, if one may judge from his religious benefactions, to St. Nicholas Church especially,† and of his household the patron saint was St. Ninian, to whom the chapel on the Castle-hill was dedicated.

How long St. Ninian's Chapel continued to be used as a place of worship no one can tell. Probably only for a very few years. It became the property of the town shortly after its dedication, and references to it occur frequently in the burgh records, but there is no evidence to show that it had a regular chaplain after about 1520. For one cannot accept as of any authority whatever the story of Kennedy that the duty of repairing to St. Ninian's Chapel every Sunday to offer up prayers for the souls of the Englishmen slain at the taking of the castle, laid as a penance on the citizens, "was held in strict observance while the

* See Halyburton's *Ledger*, Scot. Hist. Soc., particularly under date 1499. It would be interesting to know if Rev. James Blinshall, D.D., d. 1803, who was educated at Marischal College, and who left in MS. "A Short History of the English Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam," of which he was minister from 1758 to 1764, was a remanent member of this ancient Aberdeen family. From 1764 Dr. Blinshall was minister of St. Paul's Church, Dundee, and it was in remembrance of his services to Guthrie's Fund for Orphans that Blinshall Street, Scouringburn, Dundee, was named after him.

† See *Chartulary of St. Nicholas*. A plate reproduction of the Blinsel Monument in Drum's Aisle is given in *Chartulary*, II., p. 192.

Roman Catholic religion prevailed in the nation.”* No doubt the Castle-hill was a favourite Sunday resort of the citizens for many years, so much so that the Kirk Session of St. Nicholas found it necessary to issue a prohibition of the practice, but it was never suggested in those days that the object of these Sunday wanderers was to offer up prayers for either dead or living.†

We have already seen what general appearance the Castle-hill presented in Parson Gordon’s day. In one or two points, however, we have a record of certain prior changes of an interesting although minor character. We find that, as early as 1525, the Town Council were paying some attention to the matter of city improvement. On 20th June of that year “the prowest, baillies, counsell, and communitie present for the tyme, consentit to the ewynning [even-ing] of the Castell-hill, and dyking the same about.”‡ We need not suppose that this meant any lowering of the height of the Castle-hill, or of any operations on the upper part of the hill at all, where St. Ninian’s Chapel stood by this time. It was more likely a mere trimming of the fringes, as it were, to prevent the encroachment of neighbouring feuars on the town’s property. Clearly, however, the “ewynning” and dyking were not sufficient for their purpose, for we find that four years later the Council had the matter again under consider-

* Annals. I., p. 26.

† See p. 44, as to the use of the Castle-hill as a fish market on Sundays in the sixteenth century.

‡ Extracts from the Council Reg. Sp. Club. I., pp. 110-112.

ation, and resolved “to cause warkmen enter to the Castell hill one Monnonday nyxt to cum, to grayth and dyik the samyn.”* One wonders what all the dyking and protecting can mean, but a later resolution of the Council leaves little doubt that unscrupulous burghers were, in a sense, stealing the hill—that is, carrying it off in the form of sand. So, on 21st October, 1532, the Town Council had the matter under consideration, and resolved on a more formal and weighty step—

“ The said day, the consaile statutis and ordanis that, fra thinfurtht, na maner of persoun cast faile or devat in the Tounis Links and Insche, or beir ony sand fra thair Castelhill nor Vomanhill, under the pane of bannesing of tham of the tounn that beis convik heirof; and causit opin proclamatioun to be maid heirupoun at the merkat corce, that na man suld allege ignorance on the samyn,”†

These steps appear to have answered the purpose of preventing the carrying away of the material of the Castle-hill, but they did not prevent encroachment on the hill by neighbouring feuars. On 22nd September, 1578, Commissioners appointed by the community perambulated the Outer Marches of the burgh. When they reached the Castle-hill, at the close of their day’s peregrinations, they found it considerably encroached upon, and they took immediate and drastic measures for the protection of the town’s rights—

“ The saidis judges and visitouris past to the Castelhill, begynnand at the northt syd throff and decernit the litill houss sett out be Androw Jak liand nyxt the said Castel-

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 122.

† Ibid. I., p. 147.

hill to be demoliscit and also fyndis that the said Androw hes done wrang in the bigging of his gavill of the wast-houss five futt in upon the Castelhill, and in lykwayes in bigging of the barne and kyll (kyln) beside the samy upon the boundis of the Castelhill, and decernes and ordanis the said Androw Jak to big his yard four fout within the traveis of tymer as it standis, quhilk traveis thai ordanit to be demolischit and the said dyk to be biggit within the samen four fout as said is, and decernis and ordanis the myddings betwixt the buittis (butts) upon the northt syd of the Castelhill to be removit within twelue dayis under the pane of fourtie s."*

The reference in the foregoing extract to the "buittis" on the Castle-hill takes us back to the days when "Wapinschaws," or weapon-shows, were taken part in as an express, statutory duty by the citizens generally. The Aberdeen Wapinschaw, as now understood, dates only from 1862, but wapinschaws were regularly held, under Parliamentary instruction, more than three centuries before then, on the Links, at the "back buttis," where West North Street now runs, on the Woolmanhill, and the Castle-hill. It was at the Castle-hill butts that, on the occasion of his visit to the city in 1589, James VI., and his court, enjoyed the game of archery.† That was the occasion—as the burghers would have better cause, perhaps, to remember—on which the king borrowed 2000 merks

* Council Register. September, 1578.

† Joseph Robertson, evidently basing on a statement by Kennedy—Annals, I., p. 126—says that these butts were specially erected for the recreation of his Majesty and the Court. That is true, so far as concerns the butts for the royal party, but it will be seen that the Castle-hill butts were in common use many years before that royal visit.

from the town, which the Council tried in vain to recover.

As we pass the period of the Reformation, we find the chapel on the Castle-hill turned to varied and peculiar uses. From an early date the Castle-hill was naturally utilised as a suitable place for a beacon to give warning to the town's-people of the approach of an enemy, and very soon after its erection St. Ninian's Chapel was made use of for this purpose. In 1514, the year after Flodden, an attack by the English was feared, and so the Council of Aberdeen set a watch. It was ordained that four armed burghers should watch nightly at St. Fittick's, Torry, lest a landing should take place at the Bay of Nigg, that four others should watch at the Cunninghamar Hills, and that others should be on guard in the various quarters of the town itself. "And ane of the saidis personis that is warnit be the officiar soll nychtlie compeir at aucht houris on the Castell-hill, with the bailzie and officiar of the quarter, and ryng the bell of the schappel, quhilk salbe callit the waicht [watch] bell."* It must not be supposed that all these precautions involved a merely formal duty. As above said, this was only a year after Flodden, to which disastrous field Aberdeen had sent twenty spearmen and horses, and so what might be termed legitimate English foes, as well as roving pirates that infested the coast in those unsettled times, had to be guarded against. In that very year, too, the Black Death was ravaging the district, and a watch was kept for strangers likely to bring the infection of

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 92.

the “strange seiknes,” who were regarded as enemies to the community, and dealt with accordingly. Besides all these things, the turbulent county lairds required looking after, for their warlike incursions were sometimes more costly to the town than an ordinary war. It was less than a dozen years after the arrangements just chronicled were being made, that the remarkable “Camisado” took place in which Seton of Meldrum, Leslie of Wardhouse, and Leslie of Balquhain, who had entered the city under cloud of night, with fourscore spearmen, were valiantly repulsed by the citizens, but not before eighty of the inhabitants had been killed or wounded.

So convenient did the Chapel prove for this particular purpose of a watch that for a considerable period a permanent beacon was maintained on the east gable, that faced seawards. By 1566 the beacon had fallen into disrepair, and on 16th April of that year the Council ordained that there should be erected “ane gryt bowat or lamp quhair the same wes obefoir on the east gawill of Sanct Ninian’s Cheppell, upon the Castelhill, with three gryt flammand lychtis to byrne continewallie thairin in the winter seasoun.”* The Chapel itself required attention by this time, and so the Council resolved “thankfullie” to allow the account for twelve pounds “quhilk Mr. George Myddiltoune, theassaurar, hes disbursit for tuelf hundreyth sklaittis to mend the cheppell on the Castelhill.”†

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club. I., 361.

† Ibid. I., p. 360.

Many are the references to the maintenance of the beacon on the Chapel that occur in the Town Council Records about that period, but the only other one that need engage attention is an enactment of the year 1627, when intense alarm was created in Aberdeen, as in other towns, by the appearance of a hostile Spanish fleet of fourteen sail of the line off the Scottish coast. It was reported to the Council of Aberdeen that these had already landed "great numbers of sojourners" on the Shetland Isles, who were "waisting thes ylls with all crewalty, so that the inhabitantes, so many as can have occasioun of shipping, are fleeing with thair wyffes and childrene for saiftie of thair lywes." Steps were accordingly taken to put Aberdeen in a posture of defence. Six guns were mounted at the Blockhouse—a construction often resorted to in cases of emergency, but probably never with the slightest useful effect unless to allay to some extent the alarm of the townspeople. Four captains were chosen to command the town, and to instruct the citizens in the use of arms, and the citizens were held bound by oath "not to leave the toune in cace of invasioun be the enemye, bot to abyd still within the samen, and to follow thair magistrates and commanderes as occasioun shall offer, at thair best endevoires, for defence of thair lyives, thair wyffes, bairnes, and estates, so long as the magistrates keipes the toune."* At the same time the magistrates took steps to alarm both city and neighbourhood in case the enemy should attempt a

* Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc. I., p. 17.

landing. They appointed four of their number to go to the Hill of Brimmond "and thair to mark and designe the most commodious pairt for setting up of ane fyir bitt to give notice to the countrie people of the approtcheing of foran enemies," as also to consider as to what part of the town itself was most suitable for another "fyir bitt" of the same kind, which should give warning to the keeper of the beacon on the Hill of Brimmond. The Chapel on the hill was selected for this purpose.

"Conforme to the quhilke direction the saidis Commissioneres went to the said Hill of Brymmound, and thair designed and marked the most conspicuous pairt for up-putting ane fyir bitt thairupoun, and causit gadder and erect ane great cairne of stanes thairat, quhilke thay causit to be buildet, prepared, and maid fit for receaveing of the said fyir bitt ; and siclyk thay declaired that the east gavill of the Chappell on the Castelhill is the most convenient pairt about the toune for setting up the first fyir bitt, and will give the best and clearest demonstratioun to the other fyir bitt on the said Hill of Brymmound. Quhilke report and aduyse being consideret be the councell thay allow thairof and ordaines the same to be put in executioun accordinglie with all convenient diligence possible."*

* Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc., I., pp. 17-18. The arrangement must have been in the mind of the imaginative writer of "A Tour from Aberdeen to Dundee," in the New Agricultural and Commercial Magazine (1811). Speaking of the neighbourhood of Portlethen he observed—"Cairn-Ma-Nairn, Cloch-Na-Bien, and Morven in Argyle-shire, are in a straight line, and by means of fires kindled on each of these stations Scotland could have been alarmed from one side to the other in half an hour" !



St. John's Well.

Prior to its removal to its present site.

The Spanish marauders did not further molest Aberdeen, however, and the ingenious arrangement of duplicate “fyir bitts” was not required. This appears to have been the last occasion on which the beacon on St. Ninian’s Chapel engaged the attention of the authorities. It was by no means the last time that the necessity arose of watching for an enemy’s arrival by sea. Repeatedly, after that, guns were mounted at the Blockhouse, volunteers enrolled, and other measures taken for the defence of the town, but there is no more word of the “fyir bitt” on the Castle-hill, and the use of the Chapel for this particular purpose ceased from that occasion.

THE CASTLE AND THE CASTLE-HILL.

III.

LONG before the beacon of 1627 had been constructed on the east gable of St. Ninian's Chapel, many curious, and some abhorrent, scenes were being enacted on the Castle-hill. Although it lay aside slightly from the Castle-gate, the centre of life in the burgh from very early days, the Castle-hill had not merely around it a play of interest of its own, but it reflected, in a remarkable way, the movement of events in the town itself.

A glance at Parson Gordon's map, affixed to this volume, will show a fringe of houses—just as at present—between the east end of Castle Street and Castle-hill. Those dwellings arose on that western slope of the Castle-hill at an early date, and just as the Magistrates and Council had difficulty in warding off encroachments on another side of the hill about 1530, so they had trouble in preventing the feuars on this western fringe from acquiring rights on the hill to which they were not entitled. The little passage behind those houses went, in those days, by the name of Jack's Row—perhaps from the name of Andrew

Jack, the feuar on the north side of the hill, whose “littill houss” was ordered to be demolished in 1578*—and in the closing years of that century the Town Council had a complaint before them that one of the feuars in the dwellings above mentioned had constructed a back-gate to her property, giving egress “on the wast syde of the littill rew, callit Jackis rew, quhilk passes fra the Hie Street, outwith the Justice Port, to the Castle-hill, quhair never na backyett was biggit obefoir, to the gryt preiudice of the towne, to have any backyettis or passages to the Castle-hill furth of the yardis of the tenementis byand in the said eist-head of the Castelgett.”† So the Council went and examined the offending back-yett, and found the case quite as bad as had been represented. They recalled that in all times bygone, “past memorie of man,” the right of egress from the rear of these dwellings to the Castle-hill had been denied to the occupiers, and this “justlie and upon gude considerationis”; accordingly, they ordered the feuar in the present case, a lady, one of the well-known Aberdeen family of Rolland, “to big up and condampne the said backyett presentlie struckin out by hir in the eist dyck of hir said yard, within fourtie-aucht houris.” Certainly, the Council of that day had their hands full in protecting their Castle-hill. It was not quite two months after they had dealt with Marion Rolland’s encroachment, that they were called on to deal with another, at the south-west corner of the hill, outside the Futt Port. Here

* *Supra.* pp. 35-6.

† Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, II., p. 160.

a feuar—or, more accurately, his representatives—had constructed an enclosing wall that actually projected into the Fitty Wynd, now Castle Terrace—“the commoun gett passand fra the Castlehill of this burght towardis Futtie.” The Council ordained that this Fitty Wynd should be not less than twenty-four feet wide, in all time coming, and ordered the encroaching wall to be “instantlie demoleschit.”*

But presently, in the following year of 1600, that is, the Council found it necessary to deal with a different kind of complaint. It was represented to the Council that the fisher folk of Fitty were persisting in holding a fish market under the slopes of the Castle-hill on Sundays, to their own detriment, and the leading astray of the town’s people. So the authorities resolved to put a stop to the practice—

“ 22nd May, 1600.—The quhilk day, it being understand to the prowest and baillies, that the inhabitantis of the towne of Futtie, baith men and wemen, maist ungodlie prophanis the Saboth Day, be nocht keping of the sermon within the paroche kirk of the said burght afoir and efter none; and lykvayes be haulding of the fische mercat within the burght under the Castle-hill, and upon utheris pairtis of the same, upon the Saboth Day, expres aganis Goddis Commandement and the louable ordinance of this burght; thairfor ordanit that all the inhabitants of the said towne of Futtie, baith men and wemen, sall repair to the paroche kirk of the said burght, to the hering of Goddis word, an everie Sonday, befoir and efter none, in all tyme cuming, ilk maister, his wyff, and femalie, under the Payne of fourtie penneyis to be upliftit of tham sa oft

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, II., pp. 153-4.

as thay be absent, and that thair sal be na fische sauld be tham, nor na mercatt of fisches haulding, or haid be tham or thair servandis within the said burght, under the Castell in Futtie, nor yit within ony ither pairt of the fredome of the said burght on the Saboth day in tyme cuming, under the paine of escheting of the same, by the vrlaw of twentie s., to be upliftit of the contraveinar." *

Just at this time were going on upon the hill those frightful witch-burnings that for a few years disfigure the history of the whole country. From a very early date justiciary courts, and executions, took place on the Castle-hill, and the adjoining Heading Hill, for punishments on these eminences would be very conspicuous to the inhabitants, and so the chief end of punishment would be served in affording examples sufficiently obvious and telling. And so, while the bishop is said to have been holding his ecclesiastical court on the miraculously built hill of Tillydrone, near the Cathedral, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, "when the king's Justiciar came to Aberdeen, he passed forth of the city by the gate which was therefore called the Justice Port, and kept his court beneath the sky on the Heading Hill."† As time went on, we have evidence of many executions having taken place on these hills, through even the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. No doubt it was the very contiguity of the place of execution that led the executioner to take up his abode at the foot of the

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, II., p. 210.

† Chartularies of Aberdeen and Arbroath. Quoted, Book of Bon-Accord, p. 339.

Castle-hill, on the declivity still colloquially known as the Hangman's Brae. Here lived John Milne, the last public executioner of Aberdeen, whose office was abolished by the Magistrates elected under the Burgh Reform Act, 1833.*

Throughout the long period of executions on the Castle-hill, nothing more sickening or deplorable took place than the witch-burnings in the years immediately following 1590. "From the Moray Firth to Berwick," says John Skelton, "the reek of tar-barrels and fagots darkened the air," and in the height of the prosecutions the statement is almost literally true.

The burning of witches appears to have begun on the Castle-hill, or Heading Hill, of Aberdeen in that year, 1590. Walter Cullen, Reader in St. Nicholas Church, a worthy man and a true poet, as well as a

* This personage, who was a dyker, or labourer, in Old Aberdeen, was convicted of theft, before the Aberdeen Court, in 1805, and sentenced to be transported for seven years. As it happened, however, the Magistrates had for some time experienced great difficulty in filling up the office of hangman, having advertised repeatedly for some one to take up the duties, but in vain. John Milne, after his sentence, offered to take the office, on certain conditions, one of them being that the Magistrates should take the necessary steps to obtain for him a free pardon, which the Magistrates did, and Milne was duly appointed. "Johnny Milne," says Buchanan, "lived in a house on the east side of the canal, in a line with Virginia Street, a bridge crossing the canal in that direction. Johnny's house was, of course, known as the Hangman's House, the bridge was called the Hangman's Bridge, and the brae going towards it from Castle Street was called the Hangman's Brae." Buchanan, *Glimpses of Olden Days*, p. 163. A portrait of Milne is given in Seaton's *View of Castle Street*, 1806.

singularly careful chronicler, tells in his register of events that “Barbara Card, witche, was burnt on the hedownis hill ye xvi. day of June, 1590 yeris.”* Once it was begun, the work went on furiously until, in the year 1596-7, no fewer than twentie-three wretched creatures were burned to death on the Castle-hill, twenty-two of them women. It was a case, obviously, of a community intoxicated by indulgence in evil work. No doubt, many of the reputed “witches” were subjects for severe punishment, for it was well enough established that in certain cases, by the operation of their so-called witchcraft, they had been the cause of death to others just as surely as if they had resorted to poison, or the knife, but it is very clear that in Aberdeen, as in other places, ignorance and fear chiefly operated in their condemnation. So, in 1596-7 the frenzy reached its climax, and the popular admiration of the energy of the Dean of Guild, the official charged with the duty of superintending the burning of the witches, found expression in a public testimonial by the Town Council. On 21st September, 1597, they resolved that William Dun, on completing his year of office, should, on account of his diligence, particularly “hes extraordinarie takin paynis on the birning of the gryt numer of witches brint this yeir,” have granted and assigned to him the sum of forty-seven pounds, three shillings, and four-pence.† After this the frenzy of the Aberdonians

* *Sum Notabill Thinges.* p. 14.

† Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club. II., p. 155. Quoted also in Turreff, *Antiquarian Gleanings*, p. 53. Details of the accounts for rope, coals, tar-barrels, stakes, fees of

gradually subsided—perhaps a less enthusiastic Dean of Guild had been elected—but in a minor way the town went on for some time adding its share to that appalling list of more than four thousand witches burned in Scotland in that period. For certain other crimes death by burning was inflicted on the Castle-hill, the last two cases being the burning of a person of the name of Geddes, in 1640, and another, Ritchie, in 1647.* Executions by other methods were, of course, very common for a long course of years on these eminences. The instrument grimly spoken of by the Aberdonians as the Maiden was repeatedly employed. So, in the Dean of Guild's Accounts for 1595-6, we have a glimpse of the accompanying arrangements in this—

“Item, for ane garronde to the Maidin, mending of her be George Annand, wricht, scharping of the aix, for saip to the tow, kareing of her to the hill and hame agane to my Lord Merschell's Close, 25s.”†

executioner, etc., are all set out in the Dean of Guild's accounts quoted in *Miscellany of Spalding Club*, V., pp. 65-9. See also for indictments, and method of procedure in such cases, *Miscellany of Spalding Club*, I., pp. 83-193, as also the sketch, *The Devil to Pay*, in *Skelton's Table Talk*, second series, I., p. 69. In this sketch one is taken into the very atmosphere of the witch-burnings.

* Joseph Robertson—basing on Kennedy, I., p. 461—says the punishment of death by fire was inflicted for the last time in 1740, and took place on the Castle-hill. *Book of Bon-Accord*, p. 223. This, of course, is an error by one hundred years.

† Accounts. *Miscellany, Spalding Club*. V., p. 119. This was two hundred years before Dr. Guillotin advocated the adoption—in the interests of humane treatment—of his similar instrument.

The last record we have of beheading in Aberdeen is that of Francis Hay, who suffered death in this manner in 1615 for the slaughter of Adam Gordon, brother to the Laird of Gight,* and although it is not explicitly stated by the chronicler, it may be taken that this execution also took place on the Heading Hill, where, with certain historic exceptions, the “heading” of criminals was wont to be made. On one occasion, an execution took place on the hill in the military way. Spalding tells of one of Lord Sinclair’s soldiers in 1640, the regiment being at that time quartered in the town, who, for the murder of a comrade, “was had to the Heading Hill of Aberdeen, bound to a stake, and three soldiers appointed, ilk ane after another to shoot at him till he was dead.”†

Through all that period the Chapel of St. Ninian continues a silent witness of these events. We have seen that prior to the Reformation the Chapel ceased to be used for religious purposes. It may be said to have come within the sphere of such a use again when, for a short time towards the end of the sixteenth century, it was the home of the Aberdeen Song School, one of the most notable institutions that Aberdeen ever possessed. Before any other burgh in Scotland is known to have established this adjunct to the Church, Aberdeen had its Song School at work, in the middle of the fourteenth century; and, what is perhaps quite as remarkable, the Song School of Aberdeen—not taking into account the interesting but

* *Sum Notabill Thinges*, p. 23.

† *History of the Troubles*, I., p. 286.

futile attempt of the late Mr. James Walker to revive the institution, in the seventies of last century—was the last of the Scottish burgh song schools to be given up.

Till the time of the Reformation, the Song School was located in a small building in the north-west corner of St. Nicholas burying ground—"upon the wall of the churchyard," as Parson Gordon says—in convenient proximity to the Church where the master and his pupils necessarily took part in the services. For some time after the Reformation the Song School fell into disuse, being, for ten years, "destitute of all exercitioune," for in the upheaval caused by the introduction of the new religion in 1560, the master of the Song School fled, and the pupils were scattered. In 1570, however, nearly ten years before the Scottish Parliament, alarmed at the discouragement which the Reformation had put upon the practice of ecclesiastical music, passed its Act enjoining the re-establishment of Song Schools,* the Town Council appointed a new master, Androw Kempt—the rightful master, "Schir" Johnne Blak being "presentlie absent of the realme"—and for nearly two hundred years more the school continued in its duty of training the young people of the city, according to post-Reformation phraseology, in "museik, meaners, and vertew."[†] One can hardly suppose that it was the

* See Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland (1579), III., p. 174. The Act was professedly passed to provide for the "instructioun of the youth in the art of musik and singing quhilk is almaist decayit, and sall schortly decay without (unless) tymous remeid be prouidit."

† Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club. I., p. 370.

love of music, fostered by the Song School, that led Aberdeen to maintain “town’s pipers” for several centuries,* but the resuscitation of the Song School in 1570 was part of a public policy, and the policy was turned partly to utilitarian account, at the same period, in such an ordinance as this, passed by the Town Council—

“ 24 November, 1574—The said day, the haill Counsale, being warnit to this day, ordanit Johne Cowpar to pass everie day in the morning at four houris, and everie nycht at eight houris at ewyne, throw all the rewis (rues, *i.e.* streets) of the toune, playand upon the Almany quhissel (German flute) with ane servand with him playand upon the taborine, quhairby the craftsmen, their servandis, and all utheris laborious folkis, being warnit and excitat, may pas to their labouris in dew and convenient tyme.”†

The Song School remained at the corner of the St. Nicholas Curchyard until the closing years of the sixteenth century. When the Magistrates laid out the Back Wynd—or, Westerkirkgate, as it was first named—in 1594, it became necessary to clear away the Song School, and so it was removed to St. Ninian’s

* The “*piparis of Abirdene*” received a payment of fourteen shillings from the Lord High Treasurer, in 1503—and occasionally similar payments, indicating that they had been called on to play in presence of royalty. The town’s jester was evidently similarly honoured, for we read of a payment of nine shillings from the royal treasury “*for ane mantill to Johne, fule of Abirdene.*” Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer. II., p. 168. The town’s piper was suppressed, in 1630, as a kind of public nuisance.

† Council Register. Quoted in Dauney’s Ancient Scottish Melodies, pp. 117-8.

Chapel on the Castle-hill. Certain minor repairs had been made on the Chapel to make it suitable for this purpose. The Song School remained in the Chapel for only a very few years, however, and in 1601 it was transferred to "Thomas Nicolson's new biggit hous at the burn heid." In the period of the Covenanting troubles about 1640, the Song School, like the Grammar, and other schools in the burgh, was "given up, and the bairns had home to their parents,"* but it soon thereafter found a location near its old home, in the Schoolhill, until in 1746—the building having been occupied in that year by part of the Cumberland troops on the way to Culloden—the Magistrates removed it once more from the north-west corner of the town, and placed it and the English School in separate flats of a house belonging to Thomas Spark on the east side of the Broadgate.† But it was now near its end. On 15th February, 1749, the English School was removed to a house in the Upperkirkgate, and at the same time the Council ceased from maintaining a Song School ; they granted instead "to Mr. Andrew Tait, Music Master in this city, the sum of fourty pounds, Scots, yearly, for the space of 19 years after Whitsunday next, for renting a school to him in any place of the town he pleases."‡ And so the historic Aberdeen Song School, which had played an important part in the life of the burgh for four hundred years, and done its work to such purpose that visitors

* Spalding. *History of the Troubles.* I., p. 190.

† *Council Register.* LXI., p. 253.

‡ *Ibid.* LXI., p. 380.

to the town were fain to remark on the musical attainments of the inhabitants, passed away for ever.*

After serving as the home of the Song School, the chapel on the Castle-hill was utilised occasionally in receiving the remains of certain personages, which the town specially desired to honour, prior to burial. Of two such cases we have very vivid accounts. In April, 1635, there was laid in St. Ninian's Chapel the body of Bishop Patrick Forbes, an enlightened and good man, "the most brilliant star in Scotland," says his epitaph in St. Machar Cathedral, through whose instrumentality very largely Edward Raban, Aberdeen's first printer, had been brought from St. Andrews to set up his printing press in Aberdeen thirteen years before. Bishop Forbes died on 28th March, 1635, and on 8th April, the day before his funeral, the Town Council issued special instructions to the Dean of Guild thereanent—

* It was clearly due to the influence of the Song School that Aberdeen has the merit of having produced the first book of secular music published in Scotland—John Forbes's "Cantus, Songs, and Fancies," 1662, dedicated to the Town Council, for which Forbes was recompensed with "the sowme of ane hundreth merks Scotts money." Thomas Davidson, master of the Song School, provided an "Introduction to Musicke as is taught in the Musick Schoole of Abirdeene." Almost exactly contemporaneous with the discontinuance of the Song School was the rise of the Aberdeen Musical Society, started in 1747, and continued till 1838. Among its active members were James Beattie, of "The Minstrel," Francis Peacock, artist, musician, and dancing master—whose name is perpetuated in Peacock's Close; Archibald Simpson, architect, William Dauney, advocate, editor of "Ancient Scottish Melodies," and many other notable citizens.

“8th April, 1635. The quhilk day the provest, baillies, and counsall ordainis the tounes haill tuelf peice of ordinance to be shot the morne at the buriall of vñquhill Patrick, late Bishop of Aberdeine, in testimonie of thair affection and deserveyt respect to him, thairof thrie peise to be shot at the lifting of the corps out of the cheppell on the Castlehill, and the uther nyne to be shot howsone the buriall passes by the tounes merche at the Spittalhill, and thairifter the said haill ordinance to be chairgit and shot of new againe at the interring of the corps, and the haill bellis to be tollit during that ilk tyme; lykeas they appoint Walter Robertsons, Dean of Gild, to caus mount and mak in redines the said ordinance to the effect foirsaid, and what he debursses thairupoun salbe allowit to him in his Comptis.”*

Three years after this event, as Spalding tells, a ceremonial of a similar kind took place on the occasion of the burial of “the matchless lady,” the Marchioness of Huntly, who died within the Laird of Cluny’s “Lodging” in Old Aberdeen. “She departed upon Thursday, the 14th of June, [1638], about midnight.” The Marquis, the leader of the Prelatical party in the north, came not till the following Sunday, when he had the Marchioness’s body conveyed to the College Chapel, by torchlight, where it lay till the 26th, when “her corps was transported upon the night frae the College to the chapel upon the Castle-hill of New Aberdeen, and upon the 28th of June, about twelve hours of the day, she was lifted, and at her lifting the town of Aberdeen caused shoot the haill ordnances.”† The

* Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc. I., p. 74.

† Spalding. History of the Troubles (ed. 1792), I., p. 67.

burial took place in Bishop Leighton's aisle, in the Cathedral, which the Marquis bought from the bishop as a burial place. Spalding goes on to tell that on the morrow after the Marchioness's burial, "the Marquis, in high melancholy, lifted his household, and flitted hastily to Strathbogie, having ten children of singular erudition with him."

On one occasion, at least, a stranger's remains were thus laid in St. Ninian's Chapel. It was in 1645, at the height of the "Troubles," when a leader of the royalist party that, at that time, occupied the town, was slain in the Castlegate. His rich apparel, "put on the saman day," says Spalding, sympathetically, was stripped from the body. "His corpse was taken up and put in a close chest, and carried to the Chapel, there to ly, on the Castle-hill; upon the morn he was buried in the laird of Drum's aisle, with many woe hearts and doleful shots."

By this time certain notable events of a very different character were about to take place in connection with the Castle-hill. On 3rd September, 1650, Cromwell had the Scottish army delivered into his hands at Dunbar; and on the anniversary of that great rout, on 3rd September, 1651, Cromwell again destroyed a Scottish force with the English royalist army at the crowning battle of Worcester. On Sunday, the 7th of that same month, part of the English army operating in Scotland, under Monk, entered Aberdeen. A heavy fine was levied on the town, and a portion of the force was left as a garrison, which at once began the construction of a fort on the

Castle-hill. It was doubtless a grim jest for the stern Puritan troopers that they were able to utilise for this purpose part of the building stones of the erstwhile Papist Cathedral of St. Machar—which, indeed, are said to be discernible in the Castle-hill Barrack wall to this day. The English garrison remained till 1659, their presence indicated by a banner bearing the word “Emmanuel,” which, during the Cromwellian occupation, replaced the town’s flag on St. Ninian’s Chapel.

During the stay of the English garrison Aberdeen in no way suffered. Perhaps the reverse, for those troopers were keen critics of theology as well as doughty warriors, and they took very good care that while they were about—and from preachings they were never absent—the Aberdeen ministers should supply their flocks with doctrine pure and undefiled. They took care at the same time that the civic authorities should also take measures that would ensure a rigid simplicity in worship. One of the troopers, Richard Franck, wrote his memoirs, and it is comforting to know from so stern a critic that for civility and humanity Aberdeen was “the paragon of Scotland,” and if he sharply assailed the “rocky pointed stones” of the Aberdeen streets, that is only what many an Aberdonian himself has done since Richard Franck’s day.* In one respect the Cromwellian garrison failed to get the better of their northern friends. Colonel Fairfax, who was in command, received orders from Monk, prior to the

* Memoirs of Richard Franck. Lond. 1694. A second edition was edited (anonymously) by Sir Walter Scott in 1821.

departure of the troops from Aberdeen, to break down the fort on the Castle-hill. The Colonel preferred to attempt a bargain with the Aberdonians. Making due mention of the fact that the construction of the fort had cost the English about £800 sterling, nevertheless, as he said, "for the respect he did bear to this burgh," he offered the stones of the fort to the Council for the sum of £50. But the city fathers, knowing very well that Colonel Fairfax could not carry the stones away with him, nor blow them in the air, declared they would not buy the stones, at any price.

THE CASTLE AND THE CASTLE-HILL.

IV.

THE departure of the Cromwellian garrison from Aberdeen brings us within the period of Gordon's map—1661—by means of which one may take his stand, as it were, on the Castle-hill, and glance over the adjacent flats. Looking directly eastward, one sees nothing in the map except the Links intervening between the Heading Hill and the sea. That was not so, however, in reality. The burgh bowling-green lay there, very admirably described for us by a later writer, who, speaking of the Links, as a whole, says—

“ It is a smooth dry field, stretching in length almost betwixt the mouths of the two rivers Dee and Don ; and is sheltered, on the sea side, by a mighty number of downs, covered with a strong greenish plant called *bent* ; and beautified, on the city side, with a well-cultivated ground surrounded with a plantation of willows. The one end of which field affords a healthfull summer recreation of short bowls ; and the other end, the like healthfull winter recreation of the gowff ball ; and, all the year round, a pasture for fattening of mutton, and bringing forth early lambs ; so careful hath nature been that the inhabitants of this city should have a convenient intermixture of profit and pleasure.”*

* Sir Samuel Forbes, of Foveran. Manuscript in British Museum. (c. 1716). Quoted by Joseph Robertson. Collections, Spalding Club, p. 47.



The Old Grammar School, Schoolhill.

The way to the bowling-green lay along the north side of the Castle-hill and Heading Hill, and was known for very many years—indeed, is still sometimes spoken of familiarly—as the Bowl Road. In 1830, however, in response to a petition by the feuars, the Commissioners agreed to change the name of the thoroughfare to Albion Street, the name it still bears.* This Bowl Road led to another interesting portion of the Links—dignified by trees in Gordon's map, and encircled by the Pow Creek burn. It was known as Futty's Myre. Here was born, about a dozen years after the date of Gordon's Map (so that the map may be taken as fairly accurately representing the property), James Gibb—the name was afterwards changed to Gibbs—the most celebrated architect that Aberdeen has produced. Of Peter Gibb, his father, a keen Roman Catholic, some quaint stories are told, which indicate, at least, that he had the grace of humour. It is said that, at the Revolution of 1688, wishing to cast some ridicule on his Presbyterian fellow-townsmen, Peter named one of his two terriers Calvin and the other Luther. This was hardly to be endured, so the Magistrates of the day summoned Peter before them,

* Proceedings of Police Commissioners. 1830. The name Bowl Road—locally pronounced “Bool” Road—continued for a good many years afterwards to be applied to the eastmost, unbuilt on, portion of the road, where it crossed the canal. In earlier days it was known by the more expressive name of Boulget. Charter of Sir Alexander Hay (1605), quoted by Kennedy, *Annals*, I., p. 421. In the Register of Bishops (1531), it appears as “Boulgat.” Bowl Road was, of course, not uncommon as a descriptive name in other Scottish towns.

and ordered the terriers to be seized and hanged at the Market Cross.* James Gibbs, as a young man, came under the patronage of the Jacobite Earl of Mar, who raised the standard of rebellion in 1715, and by Mar's help he was enabled to study architecture on the Continent. There is no evidence that he was ever in Aberdeen after he began the practice of his profession in London, but he did not wholly forget his native city, for the still existing central portion of Robert Gordon's College is Gibbs' design ; and when the present West Parish Church was rebuilt—1732—1755—the plans were drawn by Gibbs, and presented to the Magistrates, one of the last pieces of work by Gibbs before his death.†

Casting one's eyes southward, over Gordon's map, and passing on the way the "Sandy Lands," about the site of the present Sandilands Chemical Works, one notes, in the extreme south-east corner of the flat, looking from the Castle-hill, the building so long familiar to Aberdonians as the Blockhouse. Its earliest construction has been placed from time to

* Anderson. *The Scottish Nation*, II., p. 294. Anderson has a portrait of Gibbs, p. 295, from Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting*. There is also a portrait by Hogarth ; and in the Radcliffe Library there is a bust by Rysbrack. Both Gibbs and Rysbrack, it is interesting to remember, have their names associated with Prior on Prior's monument in Westminster Abbey.

† Gibbs' chief architectural works, as is well known, are the churches of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and St. Mary's-in-the-Strand, London, the Radcliffe Library, Oxford, and King's College, Royal Library, and Senate House, Cambridge.

time under a diversity of dates. The Blockhouse in Gordon's map was resolved on by the Town Council in 1497—"for the sayftie of the towne and the resisting of the ald enemies of England"—but was demolished, and a new Blockhouse built on its foundation about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Both buildings passed through some strange vicissitudes. One or other was, by turns, a fort, a place of execution, a watch-tower against the plague, as also against invasion by sea, a gunpowder store, the residence of the Torry ferry-man, and a steering guide for ships entering the harbour. It was from the Blockhouse that the arms were obtained for the very last warlike episode that took place in the neighbourhood of Aberdeen, namely, the attack on one of the Aberdeen and London Shipping Company's smacks by a naval cutter of George III. In 1813, a few years after that affair, the Blockhouse was sold by the Town to the City Treasurer for £700, and from that time passed out of history, although not out of being. In the middle of last century it was used, in connection with the whale fishery, for boiling whale-oil, and subsequently as a store. In 1879 it was still practically intact—of circular form, vaulted within, and of very thick rubble walls. It then stood within the fish-curing premises of Messrs. Findlay & Son, Pocra Quay. At the last-mentioned date, however, it was demolished, after a history of four hundred years. By the efforts, mainly, of the late Dr. Alexander Walker, an inscription tablet was placed on the front of the premises behind which

the Blockhouse stood, which gives the information—“1477, A Fort Stood Here: 1532, The Blockhouse: 1879, This Building Erected.”*

Drawing a little nearer to the Castle-hill, we note on the map the village of *Futty*—which invites consideration, for its story is interesting, exceedingly; but this point only may be noticed for the present that its still existing church (or chapel, as it was then) dates from the same year as the Council’s original resolution relative to the Blockhouse. It was an outward and visible token of the solicitude of the authorities for the welfare of the “white fishers” of the quarter, who have never shown any disposition to mingle, in any social or public affairs, with their townsmen further west. At that time, as the map shows, the fish-town of *Futty* lay in the neighbourhood of the chapel. The present fish-town, near the pier, was laid out, and the fisher folk moved thither in 1808.†

* For the first resolution of the Town Council relative to the construction of the Blockhouse see Council Register, 11th June, 1497, quoted in Extracts from the Register, Sp. Club, I., p. 60. See also Francis Douglas, *A Description of the East Coast* (1782), p. 126. Joseph Robertson says (*Book of Bon-Accord*, p. 43) that the Blockhouse was ordered to be built in 1532, which is true, but it was the third time. Walter Thom, usually quite unreliable, gives the correct date, *History of Aberdeen*, I., p. 150, and the wrong, I., p. 171. The incident of the attack by the naval cutter is related by William Duncan, *Description of the East Coast between Aberdeen and Leith* (1837), p. 5. It may be noted that the Blockhouse is represented in Slezer’s *View of Aberdeen, Theatrum Scotiæ* (1693), and in the various reproductions of Slezer issued in the following century.

† Robert Downy, the first Librarian appointed under the Aberdeen Town Council, was in charge of *Futty Chapel* in 1632,

It is impossible not to glance for a moment, before leaving Gordon's map, at that portion of the low ground lying directly south of the Castle-hill, between the hill and the harbour. Gordon speaks of it as "Drye grownde sometyme overflowed by the tyde before the Peer was builded." The reclamation of this large piece of ground began shortly after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, and was but part of the general municipal activity which showed itself, not merely in Aberdeen, but throughout Scotland in the last half of the eighteenth century, and was so largely due to the abolition of heritable jurisdictions in Scotland, in 1748. The whole streets of buildings which arose on the ground in that half century quite changed the appearance of the district, and very curiously it was one of those who took an active part in the last Jacobite outbreak who took the lead in the new industry that for some years had its headquarters in the district. James Moir, of Stoneywood, one of the Jacobite Town Council of the city, a "Colonel" in the Jacobite army, under Lord "Lewie" Gordon, and the same whose remarkable adventures after Culloden laid hold on the imagination of John Brown, of "Rab and his Friends," introduced the sugar refining industry on his own property of Stoneywood, near Aberdeen, when that industry was only beginning to be looked at in Scotland.* Soon

when the Town's Library, until then housed in St. Nicholas Church, was transferred to Marischal College.

* He was "one of the earliest Scottish sugar refiners." John M. Hutcheson, *The Sugar Industry*, pp. 42-3. The whole

thereafter, a company was formed in Aberdeen, which, says Kennedy, who knew, "carried on the trade of baking and refining sugar, upon a large scale, for several years, but although their capital was abundant, and the credit of the partners undoubted, their undertaking was not attended with that success which they had a right to expect."* So it was given up, in the closing years of the eighteenth century. A memorial of the attempt remains, however, in the name of Sugarhouse Lane, where the building that served as the Sugar-House may still be seen, and in the name of the adjoining Virginia Street, which, like the similar name in Glasgow, is an evidence of the trading connection of the period.

Meantime, the Chapel on the hill had played some part in a curious local controversy. It was used for a time by John Spalding's own successor in the office of Commissary—an office which represented the separate jurisdiction of the old ecclesiastical court in questions of marriage, parentage, and in everything involving

history of this remarkable person is in need of being put together in an accurate, connected way. The materials will be found chiefly in Dr. Brown's *Horæ* (third series); *North British Review*, Vol. 43; the Spalding Club publications, particularly *Miscellany*, vol. I. (preface and text); *Scottish Notes and Queries*, vol. XI.; Extracts from the *Council Register*, *Burgh Record Society*, vol. II. (which covers the period of the '45). James Moir's grandson, by a daughter, was James Skene of Rubislaw, friend of Sir Walter Scott, and this connection is succinctly stated in Dr. Alexander Walker's *Disblair*, p. 16, and in the *Skene Records*.

* *Annals of Aberdeen*, II., p. 216.

the special interest of the Church which has since been merged in the Court of Session and the Sheriff Courts.* In the middle of the seventeenth century the Aberdeen authorities, acting obviously in the public interest, attempted to have this official transferred from Old Aberdeen, where he had been located up to that time, but this attempt the bishop resisted, and the matter formed the subject of repeated Acts of the Scottish Parliament. While the Commissary was actually located in Aberdeen, he sat in the Chapel, on the Castle-hill. The Town Council were anxious to make the new quarters of the official as agreeable as possible, and on 9th May, 1649, they

"gave ordour and warrand to the dean of gild to repair the chappell, and alsmutch thairof as will be sufficient for accomodating of the comissariat, with power to him to caus big partioun wallis, barres with ane seat for the judge and clerkis, strick out lichtis and ane entrie, and to caus fyll and lay the floor with taillis ; and in respect the present commissar, Maister Thomas Sandilandis hes gratified the toun in condescending willinglie to the transportatioun of the said commissariot ; thairfor, for the said Mr. Thomas, his better accomodatioun during the said Mr. Thomas his awin tyme allanerlie [only], that ane comodious chamber be prowydit within the said toune for keiping of the registeris of the said judicatorie, and the dean of gild for the tyme to pay the maill [rent] of it, and this by and attour [above and beyond] the chalmer on the end of the chappell, and quhilk they ordanit lykwaysis to be repaired for accomodatioun of the said judicatorie.†

* Innes. *Chronicle of the Family of Innes*, p. 25.

† Extracts from the Council Register. *Burgh Rec. Soc.* II., p. 95.

After this display of anxiety for the convenience of "Maister Thomas Sandilands," the complaisant Commissary, it is sad to find the bishop quietly restoring the Commissary Court to Old Aberdeen. But it was that Bishop Patrick Scougal, a masterful man, who is described to us as being "tall and stooping, big-eyed, grey-haired, and of a fearful aspect," whose own son, John Scougal, afterwards became Commissary, and Provost of Old Aberdeen.* The first Act of Parliament, of date 16 March, 1649, laid it down definitely enough that the Commissary should sit in Aberdeen, instead of in Old Aberdeen, but the Act passed unheeded by the bishop, and so it was confirmed by a second Act, passed on 12th July, 1661. But on 17th July of the following year an Act was passed rescinding the foregoing. It is the period of the Restoration, and so the Prelatical party are victorious in the dispute. The Act of Parliament lays it down that "Forasmuch as the Seat of the Comissariot of Aberdein wes formerlie in the oldtoun of Aberdein, Wher wis also the seat of the Bishop of the diocie, And that upon the desire of the Magistrats.

* *Fasti Scot.* III., (part 2), p. 886. John Scougal, Commissary and Provost, was the bishop's eldest son. James, the youngest of the three sons, was also Commissary, after his brother, prior to becoming a judge of the Court of Session, under the title of Lord Whitehill. The bishop's second son, Henry, was the author of the remarkable work, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man" (often reprinted), which had such influence on the Wesleys and others of the Methodist group at Oxford, and subsequently, through Charles Wesley, on George Whitefield.

of the Newtoun of Aberdein before the late restitution of Bishops, The Comissary Court wes removed and appointed to sit in the Newtoun ; And it being most just that the Seat of the Comissariot be wher it wes in former tymes befor these late troubles, and wher the Seat of the Bishop is, Thairfor the kingis Maiestie with advice and consent of his Estates of Parliament Ordaines and Appoints, That the Comissar Court of the diocie of Aberdein shall be in all tyme coming kept at the oldtoun of Aberdein.”* Thus it happened that Baillie Alexander Skene, writing in 1685, tells that St. Ninian’s Chapel “had wont to be employed for the Comissar Court, but now the Bishop hath taken back that Court to the Old Town as being his priviledge.”† The end of the struggle came at length after the Revolution, in an Act of 1690 which could not be disregarded, and which made provision for “the present Comissars of Aberdein and their Successors to sitt, affix, and hold their ordinary Courts within the said burgh of Aberdein” in all time coming.”‡

After the departure of the Commissary to his old quarters in Old Aberdeen, in 1662, St. Ninian’s Chapel, like Greyfriars Church, in the Broadgate, became a mere temporary resting-place for the remains of persons who had died outside Aberdeen, and were to be buried within the burgh. In 1670, the Town Council, finding that “the toune nowayes benefitted

* Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland. VII., p. 385.

† Skene. *Succinct Survey of Aberdeen*. Reprint, 1833, p. 20.

‡ Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland. IX., p. 204.

thereby," put on a charge of ten merks for every such case, the money to be applied for the maintenance of the building.

But very soon after that the chapel was to be turned to a different use. In 1662, the persecution of the Quakers began in Aberdeen. So far, in that century, the Town Council had shown a remarkable zeal in stimulating thought in the community. That is to say, the Council co-operated with Bishop Patrick Forbes in bringing Edward Raban, Aberdeen's first printer, to the town, and thereafter the public purse was unstintedly drawn upon for the encouragement of reading, poems, sermons, disputations, grammars, topographical works all being unreservedly "crowned" in this practical way by the civic authorities. The Council went so far, indeed, as to authorise the issue of a weekly periodical—the first of the kind actually published from a Scottish source—"for the use of the inhabitants," and although a copy of that remarkable "Diurnall" of 1657 has never been seen by bibliographers, there can be no doubt of its having been issued, for the town's printer was duly paid for fifteen issues the sum of "four pund ten sh."*

The persecution of the Quakers in the last quarter of the seventeenth century indicated a change in the

* See extracts from the Council Register. *Miscellany of the Spalding Club*, V., p. 181. Edmond's *The Aberdeen Printers*, parts II. and IV. Reference may also be made to an article by the present writer, in which the subject is more fully dealt with, "A Scotch Town Council of the Seventeenth Century as Patrons of Literature," in the Quarterly "Books and Book Plates," Vol. 5 (1905).

minds of the authorities. For years it went on furiously, although not to the pitch of taking away life as in the witch prosecutions, but quite as blindly, until the zeal of the authorities had to be restrained by enactments of the Privy Council itself.* While the persecution was in full blast the prison of Aberdeen became overcrowded, a circumstance hardly to be wondered at if it be true that one Baillie declared he would pack the Quaker prisoners like salmon in a barrel, and if they had no room in the prison chambers they might lie on the stairs.† Another prison had therefore to be provided, and the Chapel on the Castlehill was selected for the purpose. Not a few men of dauntless spirit were crowded into the Chapel while it was used as a Quaker prison—into a wretched single apartment, with only one small window so that, says Jaffray, the prisoners could not see their own food without the help of a candle.‡ No repressive measures ever more completely failed of their purpose. From the very prison itself was issued Robert Barclay's celebrated "Apologie," in 1676; and from the same place, in the same year, "The Way Cast Up," by George Keith, "prisoner in the Tolbooth of Aberdeen, with many brethren," one of whom was Alexander Skene of Newtyle, sometime a Magistrate himself, a historian of the city, who added

* Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc., II., pp. 189-90, 348.

† Book of Bon-Accord, p. 203.

‡ Diary of Alexander Jaffray, p. 366.

“A Postscript” to Keith’s volume, duly indited “From the Tolbooth of Aberdeen, where I am a prisoner for my testimony.”*

It was an admirable witness to the spirit of these men that the books and pamphlets they issued from their prisons dealt in no way with their own sufferings, but with, as they conceived it, a right view of religious things. All this took place under the very eyes of the Magistrates, in spite of denunciations from the Market Cross, of seizure of the publications, of destruction of Quaker property, and of what was intended as an effectual bar against the possibility of such persons being able to make a living in the town. Harsher measures—short of taking life—could hardly have been taken for the repression of liberty. None ever proved more utterly futile.†

Meantime, the strange uses of St. Ninian’s Chapel had not yet come to an end. In 1729, Col. John Middleton of Seaton, who represented Aberdeen in

* The Way Cast Up. George Keith. Lond. 1677. Relative to Barclay, of the “Apology,” the following newspaper intimation is curious—“Died at Walthamstow, David Barclay, Esq., Aged 81 years, formerly an eminent and much respected merchant in London; and the last grandson of Robert Barclay of Ury, who wrote the celebrated ‘Apology for the Quakers.’” *Aberdeen Journal*, 14th June, 1809.

† See accounts of the repressive measures against the Quakers in *Diary of Alexander Jaffray*, *Extracts from the Council Register, Burgh Rec. Soc.*, Vol. II., *Selections from the Ecclesiastical Records of Aberdeen*, the principal histories of the burgh, *Privy Council Register* and *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*.

Parliament,* obtained consent of the Magistrates and Council to utilise the chapel as a lodgment for half-a-troop of dragoons. Soon afterwards, having received intimation that a whole troop was to be sent to Aberdeen, he petitioned the Council to be allowed to construct a “too-fall” on each side of the Chapel for the accomodation of the additional troopers. This was allowed, and for a time, accordingly, the Chapel became a soldiers’ barracks. It was not very long before the murmurs of the “Forty-five” began to be heard, and St. Ninian’s Chapel was one of the buildings requisitioned for military purposes. Thus—

“8th October, 1741. The said day the Council appointed the Dean of Guild, with the Magistrates, to employ proper tradesmen for making two vaulted places at the Castlehill, the one for holding the Powder belonging to the town, and the other for Powder belonging to the Military, and to put up a brick partition upon the west side of the south door of the Chappell, and to strike out a chimney on the east end thereof, in order to be a Hospital for sick soldiers, and in order to put up some timber beds thereon.”†

This is not the first that had been heard of vaulted places on the Castlehill. Sir Samuel Forbes, writing about 1716, tells that at that time nothing was to be seen of the ancient castle, “but some subterraneous vaults,” and it is possible enough that these were about to be cleared out, or otherwise made suitable

* He was a son of Principal George Middleton, King’s College. He purchased the estate of Seaton in 1715. He died, 1739.

† Council Register. Vol. LXVII., p. 7.

for holding the military stores in 1741. In connection with the rebellion of 1745, certain incidents took place on the Castle-hill, of which we get a glimpse through the diary of one of the city ministers. On 20th December of that year, while the Jacobite forces were on their way north, to Culloden, this diarist, an undoubted Hanoverian, tells that he saw "about 300 [Jacobites] this forenoon, under arms, at the Heading Hill." The following day they took their departure.

"Dec. 21. This day the rebels marched out of town, with five pieces of cannon taken out of ships, pitched at the Bridge of Don, stiled their cannon, set a guard, and returned in the afternoon when they were joined by 316, partly French, partly countrey men from the south, and would then be near 900 men."*

The city was by no means free of the intruders, however, for two nights after the above incident, we are told, "our guard were very vigilant in the streets, and at the Ports." They had five cannon planted at the Market Cross, and one of the Baillies who ventured to look into the arrangements too closely is said to have been threatened with a naked sword. The Jacobites themselves did not go scatheless from the Castle-hill, for under a subsequent date the diarist says—"I might have written you before that the rebels had a magazine in St. Ninian's Kirk, which was blown up, and several killed."†

Beyond these occurrences, which show that the hill was, for the time being, in the possesion of the

* Diary of Rev. John Bisset. Mis. Sp. Club, vol. I., p. 363.

† Ibid., p. 377.

Jacobite army, little appears to have happened in the region of the Castle-hill in connection with the rebellion. Sir John Cope had, indeed, taken good care that Aberdeen should play as little part in the rebellion as possible. Casting his eye over the town's armament in 1745—his own forces being encamped at that time on the ground now occupied by Union Terrace—he summoned the Council to ship off the town's guns and small arms to the Castle of Edinburgh.* The Town Council very reluctantly complied. They were loth to lose their guns, however, without some recompense, and they made a representation on the subject to his Majesty—in which they naively indicated that it was they who suggested the removal of the guns. Two years afterwards a royal warrant was issued authorising the Board of Ordnance to pay to the town of Aberdeen £828 sterling for the arms, and for the damage done to Gordon's Hospital when that institution was in the occupancy of the Cumberland troops.†

As the eighteenth century wore on, the Castle-hill gradually became encircled by buildings, and by reclamation and other improvements effected between it and the harbour, and eastwards, the whole district began to assume the aspect familiar to ourselves. The hill continued, to some extent, to fulfil its early purpose. The Cromwellian soldiers did not—at anyrate wholly—destroy the walls of the fort they had constructed. “The walls of the fort,” says Francis Douglas, in 1782, “on the south and east, which are

* Council Register. Vol. LXVII., p. 212.

† Ibid. Vol. LXVII., p. 308.

almost entire, seem to be about twelve feet high on the outside, but on the inside are covered to the top by a sloping bank of earth. In the bottom is a large place of arms, called the chapel, from the lantern of which the Town's flag is displayed on public days."* It was about this time that consideration began to be given to the question of providing a military barracks on the Castle-hill. In 1776, the Town Council agreed to give part of the Castle-hill for such a purpose, and to furnish stones, lime, and slate for the building.† The negotiations between the Council and the Government Department at that time came to nothing, and opportunity was taken, in 1781, to construct an observatory on the Castle-hill, in the south-east corner, within the walls. It was erected by Dr. Patrick Copland, Professor of Natural Philosophy in Marischal College for nearly fifty years, a useful and worthy citizen, who, along with Professor Hamilton, whose name is perpetuated in Hamilton Place, was admitted a burgess of the town, without payment of the customary dues, for his trouble in connection with the water supply of the town. In those days Aberdeen had its school of astronomy, taught by Andrew Mackay, "Superintendent of the Observatory."

In 1792, communications relative to the establishment of a barracks were resumed, and this time with more effect, for in 1794 an arrangement was concluded, and the Council presented to the Government the whole area of the Castle-hill within the ramparts for the purposes of the projected barracks. The gift

* Douglas. *Description of the East Coast*, p. 100.

† *Council Register*. Vol. LXIII., p. 145.

included St. Ninian's Chapel, which in Douglas's day had come to be termed "The Chapel" by courtesy merely, and almost immediately afterwards the historic Chapel (as well as the observatory) was swept away. On 24th June, 1794, the foundation stone of the present barracks was laid by the Duke of Gordon, whose statue is a familiar sight in Castle Street, and the buildings were completed in 1796. The military hospital, in connection with the barracks, was erected on the adjoining Heading Hill in 1799.

The construction of these buildings ends the story, for although it was not till 1838 that, at the joint expense of the town and the Board of Ordnance, the Castle-hill and the Heading Hill were connected by the present iron bridge, the passing of the property into the hands of the military authorities in the end of the eighteenth century really closed the history of the Castle-hill. It passed, as it were, out of the life of the burgh. The newer streets in the neighbourhood did not share in its historical associations, and buildings on every hand have been so uninteresting in appearance as to act as a barrier against inquiry into the past. Yet they need not do so effectually. There is something in being able to stand actually on historic ground, and to see in familiar scenes and objects more than directly meets the eye. One could imagine the advantage that might be gained if it were possible, for example, for the teachers of Aberdeen to take their classes occasionally to the Castle-hill, and give them a history lesson on the spot.

THE SNOW CHURCH

THE SNOW CHURCH.

I.

NO stranger fate has befallen any of the historical possessions of Aberdeen than has overtaken the Snow Churchyard. Its name is familiar to every intelligent person in the city, yet remarkably few know the exact location of the graveyard, and the number of visitors who have actually been within the gate must be quite infinitesimal. The tourist visitor to Old Aberdeen knows nothing of it, and sees nothing of it, and it must be said that by the time he has finished his survey of the three graces of that neighbourhood, Balgownie's Brig, the Cathedral, and the College, he is hardly able to appreciate the peculiar virtues of a superfluous fourth. For you cannot profess admiration for the appearance of the place. Unless you steal surreptitiously through the garden ground of the Professor of Church History, nearly opposite King's College, you must, in order to reach the Snow Churchyard, pass through such a gateway and such an approach as might form the entrance to the Valley of Humiliation itself. And, when all obstacles have been overcome, and you wander through the tall grass and read the singularly uninterest-

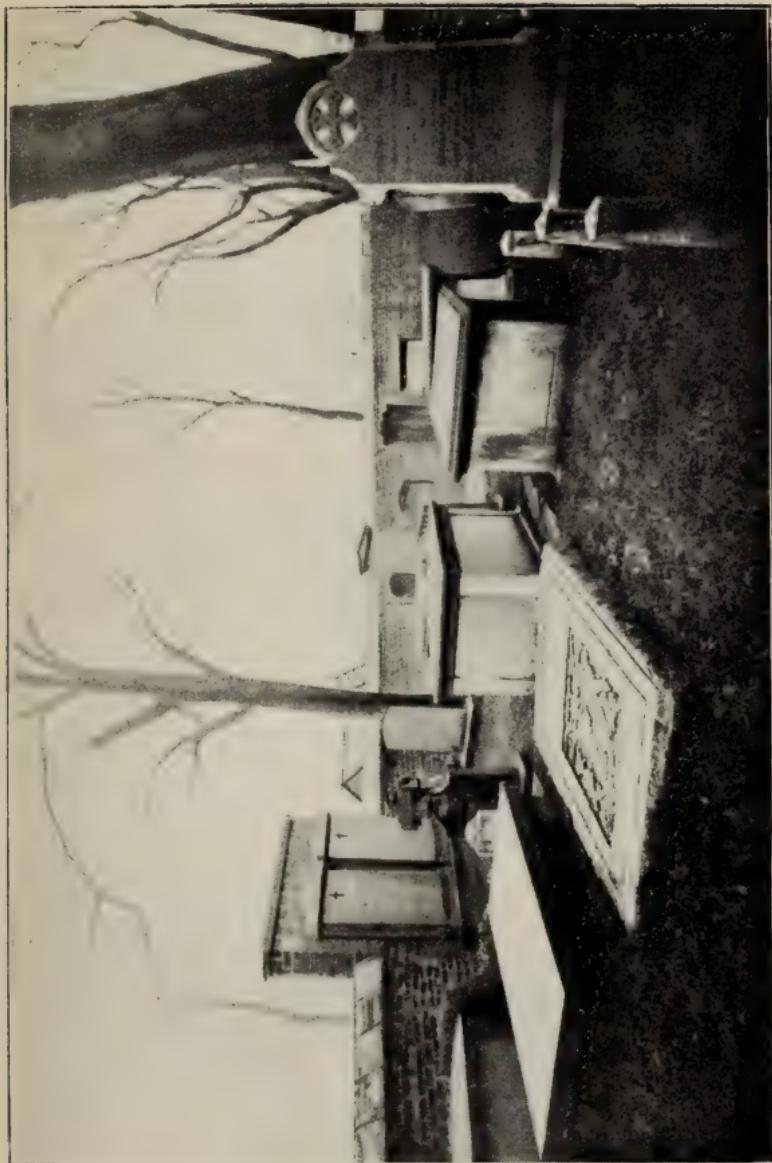
ing inscriptions—all except one—you find that visitors must bring more than guide-book knowledge with them in order to find any pleasure in their visit beyond the gratification of a mere curiosity.

And so the Snow Churchyard is left to quietude and decay. One must confess that the neglect seems almost appropriate. This little God's Acre, hiding itself away behind commonplace tenement houses in College Bounds, appears almost grateful to be forgotten. The Church was of some consequence for a short time, three hundred years ago. When evil days fell, those who retained—when everything else had been swept away from them—the right of burial in the Snow Churchyard, must have felt that a modest sepulture was best. And now, with every vestige of the old Church gone, with the area of the graveyard reduced to the smallest dimensions and situated in the most strangely obscure position, the Snow Church and its ground have not only passed from the ordinary knowledge of the townspeople, but have come perilously near passing from the ken of the historian.

In attempting to rescue, from a too kindly oblivion, the story of the Snow Church, one is at once confronted with the problem of the name. Why the Snow Church? Is the name philological, topographical, or ecclesiastical? Quite recently, an antiquarian writer of some standing gave this explanation on the point :

“In the Bull of Pope Adrian IV., 1157, to the Cathedral Church of Aberdeen, among other churches mentioned is “The Church of Aberdeen.” Nobody knows any

The Snow Churchyard.



church that this could be unless the church in Old Aberdeen called the Snaw Kirk, which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It stood West of College Bounds, near Powis Burn. In Gaelic there is a word "snamh," pronounced either "sna" or "snew," and meaning a place swimming with water, and as this describes the situation of the church in old times, the name may be Gaelic, and mean the Bog Kirk."*

This is probably the only time that a derivation of the name of the Snow Church has been sought in Gaelic, and the quest in that direction could hardly be very fruitful. Bishop Elphinstone, who founded the church, was a statesman, a courtier, a scholar, and an educationist. But he was above all things a devoted Churchman, and the idea that he selected a Gaelic descriptive name for his new church is at variance with the whole character of his life and work. It is a secondary point in reference to the above quotation that the Bull of Adrian, granted in 1157, could not possibly have applied to the Snow Church, which was not in existence till more than three hundred years after that date.†

But the name of the Snow Church has been a real puzzle to even well-informed people. It was so

* Article on "The Old Greyfriars Church," in Aberdeen newspapers, 15th August, 1903.

† It is certainly difficult to say what is precisely the meaning of the phrase "The Church of Aberdeen" in the Bull of 1157. It may be—in one place it obviously is—a general reference; but where it is specifically mentioned, along with the Church of St. Machar, St. Nicholas Church, and others, it seems to have a distinctive application. This Bull, which has been reproduced in various forms, stands, however, in much need of careful and strict editing.

as early as the middle of the seventeenth century, when the ruins of the Church were still standing, and Parson Gordon, so helpful in many ways, could give no assistance on the point.

“At some little distance from the Colledge, towards the sowthe,” writes Gordon, 1661, “stood the Parish Church of Old Aberdeen, called Sanct Mary of the Snow, its foundation now scarce knowne. Quho first builded it, few can tell.”*

However, we are not left so entirely in the dark as to the history of St. Mary ad Nives—or “de nivibus,” as it is sometimes termed in earlier documents. The church was founded by Bishop Elphinstone in virtue of a Bull from Pope Alexander VI., of date 1st March, 1497.† The bishop had just perfected the great steeple of St. Machar Cathedral, at the north end of Old Aberdeen, and furnished it with “fourteen tuneable and costlie bells,” and he had in view two other great institutions at the southern end of the burgh. One of these was King’s College, as it came to be called, for which he obtained a Bull from Pope Alexander in 1494-5; and the other was a Parish Church for Old Aberdeen, which should have a bell tower, cemetery, baptismal font, and other parochial insignia, so that the Cathedral Church might be left free for the discharge of its own proper functions. As above noted, the Bull for the erection of the Snow Church followed almost immediately after that of the College.

**Description of Both Touns*, p. 25.

†The text of the Bull will be found in Kennedy’s Annals, vol. ii., pp. 353-4.

As to the dedication of the Church to St. Mary, that is precisely what one would expect. Old Aberdeen, in the time of William Elphinstone, was wholly under the domination of the Virgin. Mary was the patron of the Cathedral Church itself, and within the Cathedral had an altar, while her portrait, with the infant Jesus in her arms, was “casten doun” by Dr. Guild and divers others—which portrait “had stood (since the upputting thereof in curious work under the ceiling of the west end of the pend, whereon the great steeple stood) unmoved till then.”* Then, above Cluny’s Port, in the Chanonry, was the effigy of the Virgin, as also on the port at the Chaplain’s Court, and, most interesting of all, Orem, speaking of the Market Cross, says—“There was engraven and cut out of stone, at the top of this cross, on the south and north sides thereof, the picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was defaced at the beginning of the Reformation.”† One must not forget, too, that when

* Orem (Ed. 1830), p. 227.

† The Market Cross of Old Aberdeen is extremely interesting as one of the cases (like that of the Cross of the larger Aberdeen) in which we have historic evidence of the existence on it of an actual crucifix. The Market Cross was erected, conform to a right contained in the foundation charter of the burgh, about 1545. It stood practically on the spot now occupied by the fountain, in front of the Town House, and was removed at the rebuilding of the Town House in 1797. The base from which the shaft of the cross rose was rescued from a smithy in Old Aberdeen, and is now preserved in the Museum, King’s College. A cut of this block, showing one of the coats of arms, is given in Dr. Alexander Walker’s “Disblair,” p. 9.

King's College was founded it was the College of the Virgin Mary of the Nativity, and although the name was afterwards changed the "statue of the Blessed Virgin, the patronal saint of the College, made of alabaster or Parian stone," which stood in the College Chapel, would keep in mind the original dedication of the institution.* We remember, further, that one of the charges on the University coat of arms is a pot of lilies, the emblem of the Virgin; and of the Burgh of Old Aberdeen itself to this day the arms are a pot of lilies, "which by their whiteness are an emblem of chastity, the town being under the patronage of the Virgin Mary."† Elphinstone was clearly full of ardent devotion to the Virgin, and it was most natural that after dedicating to her the new College he should also dedicate to her the neighbouring new church.

So far, then, "St Mary" is clear enough; what of "St Mary of the Snows"? Joseph Robertson, whose scholarship and sagacity combined to make him the first authority on many points of local history, has a reference to the Snow Church which has hitherto proved a greater enigma than the name itself. He speaks of—

"The Parish Church of Old Aberdeen, called the Snow Church, from its dedication to Maria 'ad nives' or 'ex nivibus,' so called from a superstition not more blasphemous than indecent."‡

* Trans. Eccles. Soc., Aberd., 1894, p. 105.

† View of the Diocese, p. 152.

‡ History of the Reformation in Aberdeen, pp. 6-7.

To what “superstition” did Joseph Robertson refer? He was ready enough to speak of almost any typical doctrine of the Romish Church as a “superstition,” but one cannot imagine that he applied the accompanying epithets to the very beautiful legend of the founding of St. Mary the Greater, at Rome, and yet if he had not that particular legend in view he was wrong in his reference to the meaning of the name. One can hardly help thinking, indeed, that he had his mind on the wrong story—on the legend of that St. Mary whose prolonged penance in the deserts of Egypt for her guilty youth in Alexandria was accomplished without any covering to protect her from the burning sun. The story is told of this St. Mary of Egypt how, on one occasion, the abbot Zozimus lifted up his wondering eyes in the desert and saw the form of a naked woman, who immediately took to flight. Zozimus pursued her, but had not gone far when her identity was revealed to him, and resigning, in answer to her entreaty, his cloak to her, he prostrated himself on the earth before her, craving a benediction. Both legends were used by Bishop Elphinstone in the compilation of his celebrated Breviary, and it is at least charitable to suppose that in the antiquarian mind, for the time being, the stories became confused.

In any case, the story of St. Mary ad Nives, or St. Mary of the Snows, is as innocent and beautiful as any in the Roman lectionary. In the time of Pope Liberius, John, a Roman patrician, and his wife, being childless, wished to spend their fortune in honour of the Virgin, and desired to know how they

might accomplish this. St. Mary signified to them, and to Pope Liberius, in dreams, that she wished a church dedicated to her on the Esquiline Hill, and told them that the site would be marked out by snow. And next day, accordingly, although the month was August, and the heat in Rome intense, it was found that snow had fallen, and S. Maria Maggiore was duly erected on the site. The church was known by various names, particularly by the name just given on account of its great magnificence and its rank as the second church in Christendom. But it was also known, from the above legend, as St. Mary ad Nives, and this is the name with which it was associated in the mind of William Elphinstone.*

For it fortunately happens that besides founding the Church of St. Mary of the Snows, Bishop Elphinstone compiled a book, and by its means we are left in no uncertainty as to the source of the designation he chose for the Church. In his Aberdeen Breviary, in some ways one of the most remarkable literary undertakings that ever took its rise in this part of the country, Bishop Elphinstone has, in August, the festival of St. Mary ad Nives, and in the course of six lections, or readings, set down for the festival, the story is told of the miracle of the snow. It is interesting to think that in naming his modest parish church in Old Aberdeen after the church of the miracle, Elphinstone may have had in view some

*A very full version of the lection from the Roman Breviary, by Rev. Dr. Danson, will be found in *Scottish Notes and Queries*, vol. xii., p. 78.

circumstance that made the name especially appropriate. We cannot tell. But, fortunately, as the world is not yet given over to a mere soulless philology, it is possible to appreciate the personal and devotional associations that cluster round the designation of the Church.

THE SNOW CHURCH.

II.

THE name of the Snow Church, dealt with in the preceding chapter, ceases to be puzzling when one has grasped a few plain facts. It is a little more difficult, though, fortunately, none the less interesting, to carry away the impression of the Church's history. Unhappily, one must add, it is almost wholly a history of evil days.

We have seen that the Bull for the erection of the Snow Church bore date 1st March, 1497. The building of the Church must have been carried on simultaneously with the building of the College, and there is little doubt that the barrel of gunpowder for quarrying stones and the carts and wheelbarrows which Halyburton's Ledger tells of as having been brought from Holland to Aberdeen, to the order of the Bishop, in 1497 and 1498,* were partly, at least, for use in the building of St. Mary ad Nives. Anyhow, it took little time to build, for it was a small, plain house, the erection and endowment of the College leaving nothing for the embellishment of the Parish Church. It was probably near completion in

* *Ledger of Andrew Halyburton, 1492-1503.*, pp. 183-4.

1499, and in that year the bishop united the Church and its vicarage to the newly instituted University, ordaining at the same time that the vicars should be graduates or at least bachelors in Canon Law, and that they should read—that is, teach—in that faculty in the College.* The fact that the Snow Church thus early became a sort of appanage of the University operated against its acquiring any independent or distinctive position as a church, and, indeed, so closely identified with the University did it become that it has actually no history apart from the history of the College.

One or two men of considerable distinction filled the office of vicar of the Snow Church. The first vicar was William Strachan, “a distinguished man” he is called in the official documents. Then came John Lindsay, and on his death in 1513, the prebend of St. Mary was conferred by the bishop on his own kinsman, Henry Spittale, licentiate in law. In the early thirties of that century, the prebend was held by Walter Boece, brother of Hector, the historian, first Principal of King’s College, and while he was “parson of Snaw” he had the distinction of being selected as one of the Ambassadors to England in 1532-3.† Two very remarkable men held the prebend of Snow about the time of the Reformation. The first of these was no less a personage than John Leslie, the redoubtable Bishop of Ross, friend and champion, and companion in misfortune of Mary, Queen of

* *Fasti Aberd.*, pp. 4; 29.

† Cosmo Innes. *Sketches of Early Scotch History*, p. 268.

Scots. Whether Leslie ever discharged the duties of "Parson of Snaw" is doubtful, but at least he had, in that capacity, to sustain certain responsibilities. In 1568 the Scottish Parliament passed summons of treason and forfeiture against him (and certain others), and in the endorstation of the summons it is duly set forth that—

"I Adame macculloche marchemont herald ane of the shereffis in that pairtt within constituit past at the comand of thir our sourane lords letres and lautfulie and peremptourlie sumond warnit and chargitt Johnne bischope of ros at his dwelling place and castell besyde the channourie of ros and also at his twa dwelling places and mans within the auld toun of Abirdene pertening to him as persone of snaw respective." *

By that time, of course, John, Bishop of Ross, was forth the Kingdom—in that very year, indeed, he was pleading the cause of Mary before her accusers at York; thereafter, he was a prisoner in the Tower of London, and a wanderer in many lands except his own. The only other notable person who held the prebend of Snow after the Reformation was "ane worshipfull man," Alexander Cheyne, who was also Commissary of Aberdeen, and of such local repute in his day that in 1587 he was chosen oversman in a dispute among the burgesses and craftsmen of Aberdeen that had been the subject of keen debate before the Scotch Privy Council. †

* *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, III., p. 53.

† Kennedy. *Annals* II., p. 237 and app. p. 449 *et seq.* Cheyne died in 1592. In the translation of his obituary entry

One feature the Snow Church still lacked when annexed to the College in 1499. It had no bell in its belfry. This want was supplied in 1503, when, on 29th September of that year, the dean and chapter of St. Machar Cathedral, with consent of the bishop, gifted to the newly erected parish church of St. Mary ad Nives two small bells, "the one commonly called Shochtmadony, and the other Skellat," in the southwest tower of the Cathedral.* The "campanile" provided for the reception of the bells was of the plainest description, but the transference of Shochtmadony and Skellat is of importance as indicating that by this time the last stone had been added to the fabric of the Church.

The parish work carried on in connection with the Snow Church prior to the Reformation must have been of a very unimportant character. The duties of the vicar, or rector, as he was sometimes termed, must have been mainly the duties of a teacher in the College, and as academic, as well as ecclesiastical, life

in "Greyfriars Church, Aberdeen," a note is appended to the date—"Probably a mistake for 1492." There is, however, no mistake. Cheyne died on 25th March, 1592. He was evidently active in the duties of his office up to the end. In 1589 he granted a precept of poinding at the instance of the well-known Berrald Innes, "Commissour of King's College," against the tenants of Haltown of Belhelvie, for non-payment of rent for the years 1583-1588. *Fasti*, p. 134.

* *Fasti*, pp. 7; 47. For discussion of the meaning of these names see Macpherson's "Notes on King's College, Aberdeen," pp. 6 and 8.

in Old Aberdeen was at a low ebb,* we may take it that in the thirty years before the coming of the new religion the rectorship of Snaw was an office of comparatively little account. In 1505, Bishop Elphinstone put forward his first "foundation" of the College—confirmed by bull of Julius II. in the following year—in which he laid it down that one of the six masters was to be a Master of Arts for the instruction of youths in grammar and its rudiments, who should hold the prebend, or parish church of St. Mary ad Nives; and Elphinstone's great successor, Gavin Dunbar, in an instrument of date 1529-1531, confirming a new foundation of the College, left unexecuted by Bishop Elphinstone, granted to the College the lands on which the Church of St. Mary ad Nives was built, with its cemetery, manse, garden, and buildings, and so completed the disposition of the Snow property to the keeping of the University authorities. Just prior to this latter date, in 1527, James V. ratified and approved the granting of "the parsonage and vicarage of Snaw," with other properties, to King's College; and these grants were formally confirmed by Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1562. This was probably an outcome of Mary's visit to Old Aberdeen on that notable occasion when from the

* "The teachers [of King's College] were negligent, perhaps from the smallness of their audience. . . . The College had sunk into a convent, and conventional school; and the design of the University, and the great hopes of its founder and first teachers, seemed about to be frustrated." Cosmo Innes. *Sketches of Early Scotch History*, p. 276.

window of Earl Marischal's house in the Castlegate of Aberdeen she witnessed the execution of Sir John Gordon, son of the Earl of Huntly, who had been taken prisoner a few days previously in the battle of Corrichie.*

Meantime the Reformation was spreading. Mutterings of the coming storm had been heard in early days in Aberdeen, but the storm actually burst at a meeting of "the haill toune," summoned by tuck of drum in January, 1559, at which, on the lead of Baillie David Mar, Burgh Treasurer, it was resolved to "intromet" with the property of the friars in Aberdeen.† It was a grim meaning that the canny burghers attached to the phrase, but, lest anyone should cavil, they duly agreed that the property so "intromittit" should be "applyit to the command weill of the toune, and specialy for the furthsettin of Goddis glory, and His trew word, and prechouris thairof."‡ A few months after this came the crowd of Mearns men who, reinforced by some of the inhabitants, on 4th January, 1560, looted the houses of the Black Friars

* Randolph, the English Ambassador, who accompanied Mary on her tour, writes to Cecil, Secretary of State, from Old Aberdeen, 31st August, 1562—"The Quene in her progresse is now come as far as Olde Aberdine, the bishop's seat, and whear also the universitie is, or at least one college with fifteen or sixteen scollers. Yt standeth within one mile of the other, which men report to be more beautiful and myche richer." Chalmers' "Life of Thomas Ruddiman," p. 7.

† Extracts from the Council Register, Sp. Club, I., p. 315.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

in Schoolhill, and the Grey Friars in the Broadgate, and were only prevented from demolishing the Greyfriars' Kirk and carrying off the materials by the magistrates, who thought it time to interfere—not, indeed, for the preservation of the kirk, but in virtue of the resolution that it should be “intromittit” for the general behoof. The Reformers had made an attack on St. Nicholas Church, but, fortunately, were driven off; they were similarly prevented by the Catholic Earl of Huntly from destroying St. Machar Cathedral, but as the Cathedral was robbed by Huntly himself and the Catholic clergy under pretence of safe keeping of the property, not everything was gained to the Cathedral by their friendly intervention.

The point of chief interest to be noted at present, however, is that as the spulzieing Reformers swept out to the Cathedral they appear to have left the Snow Church unmolested. Its insignificance probably saved it, or, it may have owed its immunity from attack to the efforts of the College Principal, Alexander Anderson, who successfully withstood the Mearns mob when they gathered from tearing the lead from the Cathedral roof to perform a like duty on the roof the College.* The Snow Church itself was a modest building, standing east and west within a walled enclosure, and although the eastern boundary wall came quite close up to the public highway, and the Church could be easily enough seen by the passers-by, there would be little in the appearance of such a property to excite the anger or cupidity of its enemies.

*Cosmo Innes. *Sketches of Early Scotch History*, p. 279.

Although the worshippers of the Snow Church must have been comparatively few, some at least remained faithful after the Reformation, and so recourse was had to a formal enactment, under the hand of the King, to end their existence as a separate congregation. On 15th May, 1583, therefore, a "precept" of James VI. was duly issued for the union of the Snow and Spital Churches with the Parish and Cathedral of St. Machar. The phraseology of the document shows clearly enough whence the scheme originated, and as the "precept" is important in various ways, it may be as well to quote it in full:—

" James, be the grace of God, King of Scottis to all and sindrie oure lieges and subdittis quhome it effeiris. . . . greting wit ze ws understanding that be act of oure Parliament it is thocht expedient statute and ordanit that everie paroche kirk and samekill teindis as sall be fund to be a sufficient and competent parochin thairfor sal haf thair awin pasture with a sufficient and competent stipend according to the estait and habilitie of the plaice and we considering that the kirkis of Snaw and Spittall personage and vicarage of the same ar situat within the myddis of the parochin of Sanct Machare quhilk is the parochin of the Cathedrall Kirk of Auld Aberdene, and that the teindis of the saidis thre kirk—viz., of Machar, Snaw, and Spittall, ar all united and annexit to the Collage and Universitie of Aberdene, as lykewyise that the fructis of the saidis kirks of Snaw and Spittall ar not abill to sustene ane minister of Goddis word to serve and mak residence at the same nether yit ar thay congregatis of grit boundis or utherwyiss populus that thai require ony severall ministratioun bot maist convenientlie may resort to the said cathedrall kirk of Marchar parochin, and heir the doctrine of the evangell,

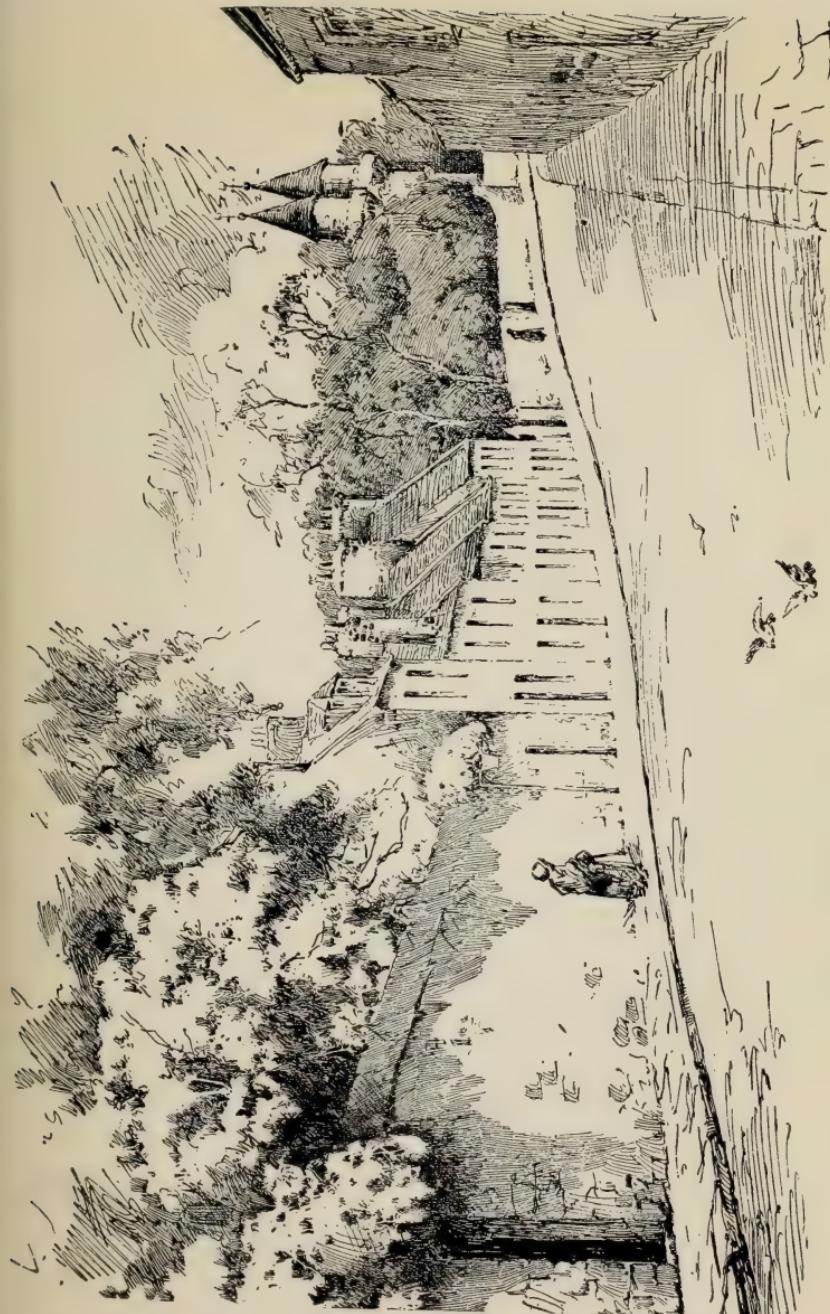
and be subject to the discipline of the same thay being all annexit to the said collage willing to find a qualifeit minister for thair comfortis and we willing the incress of Goddis glorie be the preiching of the evangell ovir all pairtis of oure realme, and that competent and qualifeit ministeris may be found to waik on thair vocatioun Thairfore have unitit and annexit . . . the saidis parsonageis and vicarageis of Snaw and Spittall with all that may efter follow to the said parochin and paroche kirke of Machar callit the cathedrall kirk of Auld Abirdene as haill incorporat in ane parochin in tyme cuming to be servit be ane minister and under ane discipline, and that the parochinneris of Snaw and Spittall be compellit to resort to the said kirk of Machar to heir thair the evangell preichit the sacramentis ministrat and discipline exercisit as to thair awin proper parochin in all tyme to cum and confer and contribute to the reparatioun of the said kirk of Marchar as to thair awin paroche kirk in all behalffis and oure utheris letteris to be derect for reparing of the said Machar Kirk to be extendit to the saidis parochannis of Snaw and Spittall in all poyntis with power to the said collage of Aberdene and memberis thairof with advyse of the taxmaisters of the paroche of Machar to dimoleishe and tak doun the ruinous wallis and tymber of the present kirkis of Snaw and Spittall now abusit to superstition and idolatrie, and to employ the same for reparatioun of the said kirk of Machar being utherwyiss a grit and costlie work as thair will answer to God," etc. *

This matter of the grants of Snow Church property forms a problem in itself, and with regard to it some confusion has arisen. Spalding† states, and Kennedy‡ has followed the statement, that after the

* Fasti, Aberd. pp. 131-2.

† History of the Troubles, I., p. 349.

‡ Annals. II., p. 354.



College Bounds, showing entrance gate to Snow Churchyard.

The entrance to the Churchyard is immediately beyond the row of houses on the left.

Reformation the Snow Church, with the parsonage and vicarage, was granted by King James VI. to King's College, and this was confirmed by an Act of Parliament in 1617. But by King James's "precept" of 1583, as above, it will be seen that the parsonages and vicarages of Snaw and Spittal are united to the parish and Parish Kirk of Machar, and these churches, "now abusit to superstitioun and idolatrie," are to be demolished, and the materials employed on the reparation of the Kirk of Machar. This was plainly an infringement of the rights of King's College, to which the Snow Church and its lands had already been united. On this footing, however, matters were allowed to rest until 1617, but in that year, by an Act of the Scottish Parliament, the grant of the parsonage and vicarage of Snaw, with their pertinents, is confirmed to King's College,* and this is ratified and confirmed by an Act of Charles I. in 1633,† and by an Act of Charles II. in 1670.‡

By the time of Charles II., however, little was left to the College authorities to administer of the Snow property save the drawing of dues for burials. Dr. Guild is blamed by Spalding, as usual, as being the chief destroyer of the property:—

"The Presbytrie of Aberdein upon this Thursday [15th October, 1640,] gave order to remove Doctor Guild frae his ministrie at New Aberdein, and to enter himselfe to

* Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, IV., pp. 576-7.

† Ibid. V., pp. 74-5.

‡ Ibid. VIII., pp. 26 *et seq.*

the Principalitie of the College of Old Aberdein, according to his election, and he obeyed and entered home that samen day. The first work that he begane was, he yoked George Ronald, mason, to the Snew Kirk, and cast doun the walls thereof, such as was standing, and caused transport the stones to big up the College yard dykes, and to employ the hewen work to the decayed chamber windowes within the said house, whereat many Old Town people murmured, the same being the parish kirk sometime of Old Aberdein within the whilk their friends and foifathers were buried.” *

Dr. Guild was blameworthy, on many grounds, in respect of his actions at that time, but there is evidence that Spalding exaggerates the share he had in the demolition of the Snow Church. From the above extract one would fairly conclude that Dr. Guild completely destroyed the building and carried off the materials. As a matter of fact, he did neither. In Parson Gordon’s View of Old Aberdeen, of date 1661, fully twenty years after Dr. Guild’s alleged iconoclasm, the ruins of the Snow Church are shown. The building is still standing at that date, roofless indeed, but sufficiently intact to exonerate Dr. Guild from the too sweeping condemnation of the partisan Commissary. Then it is clear that some part at least of the walls were still standing in 1671, for on 10th April of that year the College authorities “appoyntit that Mr. Patrick Gordone (humanist) sould exact no les then aucht pundis Scots money for everie persone who sall heireftir be buried in the Snow Kirk, and ane dollar

* Spalding. *History of the Troubles.* (Bannatyne Club) I., p. 264.

for everie on that bees buried in the kirkyeard."* With regard to the removal of the Church, the likelihood is, indeed, that it disappeared gradually through the course of time and the appropriation of the materials for building purposes by feuars in the neighbourhood. But not only did the Church disappear. The churchyard also was gradually encroached upon. At the present time the little cemetery marks the outline of the Church as it formerly stood, and one is thankful that, with its many associations, it possesses this additional significance.

The Snow Churchyard is still being used as a place of sepulchre by certain Roman Catholic families or institutions who have the right of burial there, and as a property it remains wholly in the hands of Aberdeen University by virtue of the grants and confirming Acts already quoted. The "appoynment" of 10th April, 1671, that "aucht pundis Scots" should be the burial fee, remains in force to this day, although the fee is now paid in sterling money, and every time a burial takes place the sum of thirteen shillings and fourpence is paid over to the University funds. Not very largely does the University benefit from this source of income, for the number of burials in the Snow Churchyard is very small—the last, curiously enough, was the burial of the few bones turned up very recently from the foundations of the old Greyfriars Kirk, which the Town Council rightly directed to be interred where they should mingle with kindred dust. Since 1776, prior to which no record exists, one hundred and sixty

*Fasti Aberd., p. 431.

burials have taken place in the Snow Churchyard. Two Roman Catholic bishops lie there, Bishop Grant, and Bishop Geddes; many Roman Catholic priests and private persons, including several of the historic family of Menzies of Pitfodels, members of which played a leading part in the public life of Aberdeen for at least six hundred years. As time wears on, however, burials in the Snow Churchyard become fewer and fewer, and in the last quarter of a century only thirteen persons have been carried there to their rest. But in a special sense they rest in peace, in a retirement accentuated by the nearness of ordinary dwellings and the bustle of common life, and their resting-place is hallowed, in some measure at least, by a history of more than three centuries of misfortune and decay.

THE WOOLMANHILL
AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

THE WOOLMANHILL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

I.

IN making special inquiry into the history of Aberdeen, one is struck by the singular lack of legend in the annals of the burgh. To some extent, no doubt, this is true of other Scottish towns, but Aberdeen stands lowest, probably, among really ancient burghs in the play of the supernatural, or the imaginative, in its history. This may be the price that has to be paid for the more substantial qualities of intellect with which the inhabitants have always been credited, but it may be urged against a community, as it was urged against Wesley, that it is a real defect to be always so sensible. It takes more than ability to give personal charm, and a little play of the fancy will usually be found essential to the making of a complete character in either a person or a race.

However that may be, one can easily imagine that if any part of Aberdeen were to be the scene of those "eerie legends" which the poet has permitted himself, in a moment of freedom, to associate with the neighbouring coast, it would be the Woolmanhill. It was, for ages, the westmost of the hills on which the burgh

stood, touched daily by the last beams of the declining sun. It rose just beyond two burying-places, suggestive juxtaposition, and past the base of the hill ran the tireless, lonely stream in which the kelpies might have gambolled to their heart's delight. But one seeks in vain for traces of the airy footsteps. It is all hard, unyielding, historic fact, and plenty of it. For if, in dealing with this quarter of the city, we find none of the subtle charm that comes of pure romance, we shall find abundance of historical and personal memories of exceeding interest.

For many years, for centuries indeed, the Woolmanhill was beyond the burgh, only resorted to and thus brought within the sphere of burghal life, as it were, on very exceptional occasions. Until well through the fifteenth century, at least, the town, on that north-western side, does not appear to have reached beyond the neighbourhood of the Upperkirkgate Port, for although Schoolhill, the street that now extends from the Upperkirkgate to Woolmanhill, had its name somewhat earlier, it seems to have had no existence as a street in the proper sense before the date mentioned.* As a place-name, however, the Schoolhill was already familiar to the townspeople, and, as we shall see presently, it was already the home

* The Upperkirkgate Port, which gave egress to the Schoolhill, was known also as the Schoolhill Port for many years. In 1514, when the plague was in the neighbourhood, the Town Council ordained that only three of the Ports be open for the entrance of strangers—"that is to say, the Skulhil Port, the Gallowgat Port, and the hil Port of the Castlegat." Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 90.

of certain notable Aberdeen institutions. In the Schoolhill the Knights Templars owned land, as in many other parts of the town and neighbourhood, till the suppression of the Order in 1312, and some part of their property at least passed into the hands of their successors the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, an interesting memorial of whom still exists in St. John's Well in that same quarter of the city.*

It is not to be supposed that in the days of the Templars any actual dwellings had been erected in the Schoolhill. It was beyond the "back yetts" that formed, in a sense, the defences of the town, and were carefully closed and guarded by order of the Magistrates on occasions of public alarm.† By the latter half of the fifteenth century, however, Schoolhill had

* In the "Rentall of the Tempill Landis in Aberdene, quhilk are now [1641-2] halden in frie burgage," are the following—"The tenement belonging to Johne Nun and John Calder, in the Schoolhill, payes onlie ane pennie blansche" [one white penny]. Treasurer's Accounts. Mis. Sp. Club, V., p. 160. St. John's Well "was situated at the north end of a piece of ground known as St. John's Croft; but it is not certain whether the well gave name to the Croft or *vice versa*." Mackinlay. Influence of Pre-Ref. Church on Scottish Place-Names, p. 339. The well was carefully restored by the Aberdeen Police Commissioners in 1852, and although removed from its then site on the construction of the Rosemount Viaduct, in 1885, was reconstructed where it now is at the foot of Skene Row.

† "Item, al man that has back yettes close thaim, swa that thair cum na skaith throw thame to the toune, under the payne of acht schillinges, and at thai lok thair foryettes within viij days under the sammyn payne." 5 Sept., 1442. Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 9.

become one of the ordinary streets of the burgh. In 1461 one of the endowments of the Altar of the Holy Cross, in St. Nicholas Church, consisted of nine shillings and four pence "from the land of William Beelde in the street of Sculhill, between the land of Thomas Meldrum on the east, and the land of Alexander Crag on the west.* And this shows not only that Schoolhill had now become a street, but that private dwellings, such as they were in those days, were being constructed regularly along the thoroughfare.† In 1493-4 "Walcar, Robert, in Skulhile (for a gown to Henry Chantor in the Choir)" is entered on the roll of Burgesses of Guild and Trade;‡ and by the same period the fees derived from the Schoolhill, as a residential quarter, were taken into account in paying church expenses. In 1477, the Alderman and Council ordained that "for the upholding of divine service, daily to be made in the qweyr and kirk of

* *Chartulary of St. Nicholas, II.*, p. 49.

† "Lands" in this connection meant, of course, dwelling houses. Thus, the Scottish Parliament, in 1621, passed an Act that slate or "skailzie" roofs must be provided for all "lands" that were ruinous in Edinburgh. In an "Act regulating the manner of building within the town of Edinburgh," 1698, Parliament laid down regulations for "the building of any new houses or land within the city." The word was used in the same sense in Aberdeen from an early date. In 1392 the Black Friars held "ane annual rent of nyne schillingis stirling out of the land inhabited by William Sherow Lyand in the schipraw." The phrase is still in common use to denote "tenements" in certain Scottish towns.

‡ *Mis. Sp. Club, I.*, p. 37.

Aberdeen," one of the clerks was to have the Gallowgate quarter for his fee, another the Castlegate quarter, a third the Shiprow and the Green, and the fourth "the Gaistraw, with the Sculehill." *

While as yet no Schoolhill existed, even as a place-name, this neighbourhood was selected as the site of the "Great Church" of Aberdeen, the Church of St. Nicholas, which, with its grave-yard, still occupies the space between Union Street and Schoolhill, with a north entrance to the churchyard from the last-named thoroughfare. It must have been near this north entrance that, as Hector Boece says, the bodies of the Englishmen slain at the taking of the Castle were interred—"at the postern gate of the Church of St. Nicholas." This was in 1308. How soon before that date a church was erected on the spot can hardly be determined with exactness, but it may reasonably be supposed that at least two hundred years before the affair of the Castle a church stood on this spot near the Schoolhill. In 1157 the Bull of Adrian IV., which confirmed previous royal grants to the Church of Aberdeen, and is the first undeniably authentic document relating to the Church in this neighbourhood,† names, specifically, "the Church of St. Nicholas of Aberdeen," and keeping in view the comparatively settled condition of affairs in the district, of which the Bull of Adrian is itself an evidence, it is not too much to assume that a Church of St. Nicholas had been

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 35.

† Cosmo Innes. Registrum Epis. Aberd., I., pref., xix. Lawrie. Early Scottish Charters, p. 354.

provided for the townspeople on that site near the Schoolhill as early as about 1100 A.D. Parson Gordon says "the Old Church began to be builded by the citizens about the year 1060," but known authorities do not warrant us in pushing St. Nicholas Church back quite so far. It may be that a primitive church or chapel occupied the site previously, but in any case, what may be called the historic church has looked over this part of the city for the long period of at least eight hundred years.

It is not intended here to even indicate the history of the Church of St. Nicholas. That work is waiting to be done, and materials exist that should enable the historian to lay before the world a story of remarkable interest and value. The only point to be noted here is that the situation of the Church drew the burghers from the earliest days out to the neighbourhood of the Schoolhill. The churchyard seems to have been, as we should now say, the recreation ground of the townspeople, but when used as a golf course the authorities naturally felt it was time to interfere.* It is worthy of passing note, however, that the first actual pleasure park that Aberdeen possessed was provided on the adjoining Woolmanhill, by George Jamesone, whose house in the Schoolhill overlooked the churchyard.

It is usually assumed that the Schoolhill derived its name from the presence there of the Grammar

* In 1612-13 John Allan, cutler, and John Allan, bookbinder, (perhaps his son), were convicted of "setting ane goiff ball in the kirk yeard and striking the same against the kirk." Mis. Sp. Club. I., p. 89.

School for a period of six hundred years. This is probably correct, but it has to be kept in mind that the Song School, or Music School, also stood in Schoolhill, and probably from as early a date as the Grammar School, and although its very close relation to the Church would tend to obscure its character as a "school," it doubtless contributed, in some measure, to fix the name of the locality. On the other hand, the Grammar School had both a distinctive function, and occupied an independent and conspicuous site on the upper part of the eminence, which, on this account, would be familiar to the burghers as the School Hill before the name became absolutely fixed as the formal designation of the street.*

The story of the Song School, as a now little known Aberdeen institution, has already engaged attention. One is tempted to linger over the still more remarkable history of the Grammar School, which has sent into the world so many distinguished men, and continues to carry on so efficiently its truly beneficent work. The Grammar School of Aberdeen emerges into notice first in 1262, when "Master Thomas of Bennum writes himself 'Rector Scholarum de Aberdeen.'"† This fortunate entry stands alone

* The relative situation of the two schools to each other, and to St. Nicholas Church, is very clearly brought out in the map of the Crofts appended to Mr. Anderson's Charters and Other Writs illustrating the History of Aberdeen.

† *Registrum de Aberbrothoc.* Quoted by Cosmo Innes, who adds—"We learn at a later period that these were regular burghal schools, endowed by the community, and under the

in the obscurity of the period, for we get no further reference to the school for a century and a half. In 1418, however, by which time municipal institutions were getting into shape, and the Town Council had begun to keep the now invaluable records of their proceedings, we begin to get more definite accounts relative to the school. In the course of 1418, the Mastership of the school became vacant, through death, and the Magistrates, Council, and Community presented Mr. John Homyll to the office. On 10th October, Duncan Petit, Chancellor of Aberdeen, granted letters by which he instituted the presentee to the office during life, in terms of the presentation.*

Throughout that long period of six hundred years many events happened in connection with the Grammar School that might well be brought into view. One remembers, for example, that it was a Master of the School who first advocated the principles of the Reformation in Aberdeen, and thirty years before these principles were approved by the community. This was John Marshall, who, about 1521, "was summoned to appear before the Provost to answer for his contempt of the Church, for being deficient in due

patronage of the Magistrates." Sketches of Early Scotch History, pp. 255-6. Relative to this reference in the Arbroath Register, Dr. Moir states—"This is the first mention of a rector of the school. The plural 'scholarum' is the usual form of the period, and is used probably to include the 'Schola Grammatica,' and the 'Sang School.'" Boetii, Murth. et Aberd. Epis. Vit. Edited and translated by James Moir, pp. 15, 134.

* Council Register, vol. V., p. 766. Quoted, Kennedy, Annals, II., p. 122.

subordination to it, and for the doctrines which he promulgated.”* Marshall withheld his opponents for two years, but finding the current of opinion too strong for him, he recanted, and expressed to the Magistrates his contrition. It is a little strange, in view of this, that exactly a century afterwards, in 1622, not only was a grandson of John Knox educated at the Grammar School of Aberdeen, but he was boarded with the Master, the well-known David Wedderburn, and the Town Council held themselves responsible for his maintenance to the substantial amount of “four score pounds quarterly, during the space of four years.”†

In those days the Grammar School was a very modest structure—it remained such, indeed, till very recent days—but the evidence is that it was rather neglected by the authorities. On 13th October, 1527, “the maister of the grammar schiull exponit to the toun that thair grammar schuill was decayden and abill to fall down. And thereftir the provest, baillies,

* Kennedy. *Annals I.*, p. 110.

† Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, II., pp. 375-6. This was Nathaniel Welsh, son of Knox’s daughter, Elizabeth. Nathaniel died young. He was shipwrecked, and the story is that he saved his life by swimming to a desert rock, where he perished of hunger. His body was afterwards found in the posture of prayer. Rogers. *Genealogical Memoirs of John Knox*, pp. 147-8. It will be remembered that this young man’s father, John Welsh (or Welch), was one of those who attended the prohibited Assembly at Aberdeen in 1605. For this, he and four others were tried in the following year for treason, the case lasting from January till October.

consail, and communitie commandit and chairgit thair maister of kyrk wark to big and mend the same one the tounis expensis, and that incontinent.”* As late as the seventeenth century it was still a thatched house, although “sklaittis” had been known in the town as a roof covering for at least two hundred years, and by the middle of that seventeenth century the slaters of Aberdeen were sufficiently strong as to arouse public feeling over their “exhorbitant prycs.” But they were not made use of for the Grammar School. In 1594-5 an account is passed of fifty shillings “for mending the grammar scoole with hedder.”† Such an item recurs repeatedly in the accounts, and in 1612-13 twenty-three shillings and fourpence was paid “for repairing the gramer schole, the thak thairof being blauin aff,” and on this very disastrous occasion more than the “thak” was damaged, for the repairs included also “ane tree to be lathe and ane deale to be ane window.”‡ Of course, the Grammar School was not alone in being thatched in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The prison was in the same state, but it was not creditable to the authorities that the only educational establishment under their care, more than half-a-century after the Reformation, should be in no better condition than the “towbuithe that the theves brak.”

The later history of the Grammar School can only be glanced at. In 1626 Robert Ferguson, burgess,

*Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., 120.

†Treasurer’s Accounts. Mis. Sp. Club, V., p. 118.

‡Ibid. V., p. 90.

presented to the Magistrates and Council “ane bell new stockit, whilk he frielie gives and mortifies, for the use of the grammer school of this brugh in all tyme cumeing; Lykas he promises on his owne chairges to cause bigg a belhouse, of eastler worke, one the said grammer schooll, and to put up the said bell therin, to serve for the use of the said school in all tyme heirefter.”* The school appears to have been rebuilt about that time, but the building familiar to Aberdonians in recent generations was erected in 1757 for the modest sum of £400. This was the little building, which, viewed from the Schoolhill, formed three sides of a square—but was actually of the shape of a capital H—the school of James Beattie of “The Minstrel,” and Byron in the earlier days, and, in more recent times, of John Hill Burton, Professor Masson, Professor Bain, Dr. Walter C. Smith, Professor Croom Robertson, Sir George Reid, late P.R.S.A., Forbes Robertson, and of many another who has in some degree influenced the life and thought of the English-speaking race. It is, indeed, odd that the only really great imaginative writer which Aberdeen produced in the nineteenth century, Dr. George MacDonald, “skipped” the Grammar School, and the circumstance at least illustrates how much we may owe, or have against, our teachers. James Melvin, the famous Master, so distinguished as a mere grammarian, admittedly lacked both the grace of humour—and, so, breadth of

*Mortifications under the Charge of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Aberdeen (1849), p. 7.

sympathy—and, wholly, the gift of imagination. This ancient site of the Grammar School was left in 1862, just six hundred years after the school first emerges into public notice. When the building was demolished, prior to the erection of the Art School, on the same site, in 1881, the old familiar belfry was preserved, and may still be found, after a little search, behind the palatial Grammar School of the present day.*

The other early institution in the Schoolhill neighbourhood was the monastery of the Dominican, or Black, Friars, which stood between the Grammar School and Woolmanhill. Just as the Trinity Friars obtained the gift of a royal “palace” in Aberdeen, from William the Lion, so the Black Friars began in a similar way by receiving at the hands of Alexander II., about 1240, a gift of his house and garden in the Schoolhill, where they erected their monastery and church. The most eminent person connected with

*Representations of the old Grammar School are numerous. The following contain very good cuts or plate drawings of it:—Wilson's *Delineation of Aberdeen*, p. 55; Rettie's *Aberdeen Fifty Years Ago*, p. 86; Munro and Gordon Burr's *Old Landmarks of Aberdeen*, p. 35; Robbie's *Aberdeen: Its Traditions and History*, p. 432; Professor Masson's *James Melvin*, p. I.; Walker's *Disblair*, p. 3; *Memoir of John Brebner (Superintendent of Education, Orange Free State)*, p. 19. It would be an interesting duty for some Old Boy of the Grammar School to compile a bibliography of the institution. Three cases of its use in fictional literature occur to one—by Dr. Gordon Stables, repeatedly, in his schoolboy stories; by Canon Low, in his Aberdeenshire story, “*Reuben Dean*” (1898), and by George MacDonald, in “*Robert Falconer*.”

the Black Friars in Aberdeen was John Adam, or Adamson, Prior of the Order, "the first who took the degree of Doctor of Divinity in the King's College."* Soon after their establishment in Aberdeen they received numerous other gifts and grants, and became a comparatively rich body, holding possessions—from kings and commoners both—in many parts of the town and shire of Aberdeen.† The property of the Black Friars suffered greatly at the Reformation. In their case the trouble began in 1544,‡ but reached a climax on that memorable occasion in 1559, which saw great sights in Aberdeen.

"4th January, 1559. The said day, the haill toune, being warnit, etc., it wes exposit to thame be the baillies, be the speech of David Mar, and of the baillies foresaid, and thesaurer of this guid toune, eleckit for this present yeir, quhow that certaine strangelaris and sum nichtbouris and indwellaris of this brught hes enterit to the blak freiris and quhit freiris of this toune and spulzeit thair places, and takin away the gere and gudis of the samen, with the tymmir wark and insicht, togidder with the leid of the kirkis, and now ar enterit upon the rooffis of the

* *View of the Diocese*, p. 201.

† See Kennedy, *Annals*, II., pp. 69-72; *Antiquities of Aberdeen and Banff* (Orig. Sp. Club), III., pp. 113-5, etc., *Inventory of Charters relating to the Blackfriars in Aberdeen*, *Scottish Notes and Queries*, VII., pp. 120, 134, etc.

‡ In September of that year, for injuries committed on the Black Friars a number of persons were compelled to undergo penance in St. Nicholas Church, to apologise publicly to the Prior, and give caution, pledging themselves to abstain from any offence of the kind in future. Extracts from the Council Register, Sp. Club, I., p. 206.

kirkis and biggings, and takand away the sklaytis, tymmir, and stanes thairof, applyand the samen to thair awin particular uses ; and inquirit the toune gif thai thocht it expedient to preserve the saidis tymmir, sklaitis, and stanis, and the samen to be intromittat and applyit to the command warkis of the toune for the command weill and utiltie thairoff, togedder with the croftis, landis, and emolimentis that belangit to the saidis freiris, and the profyttis thairof to be applyit to the command weill of the toune and specialy for the furthsettin of Goddis glory and his trew word and prechouris thairof, and that the toune ma be the moir habill to concur and assist for the defence of the libertie of the realme, expelling of strangeris and suppressing of ydolatrye, and requirit thame opinly to declair thair myndis and conclud quhat thai thocht expedient to be done heirintill.”*

Whereupon, we are told, “ all in ane voce that war present, except Gilbert Collisone,” consented and assented that the property of the Friars should be seized accordingly, and in order that everything should be so “ intromittat ” decently and in order, due public proclamation of this resolution was made from the Market Cross. Most of the Black Friars’ property passed to the Crown, and was acquired by the Earl Marischal for the endowment of Marischal College. And thus was retained, incidentally, an interesting connection between the Keiths and that little spot of ground where their dead had been buried for generations. “ On the very spot where the Art Gallery now stands,” said the late Dr. Walker, “ I saw many of the skulls of these pious men, [the Black Friars], turned

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., pp. 315-6.

up again to the light of day, and a few feet beyond the northern gable walls of the Museum there were found, some years ago, in a sort of vault, three skeletons. This vault was in front of the high altar of their little chapel, and belonged to the Keiths, Earls Marischal. On the neck of one of the skeletons a silver heart was attached to a silver chain: it is now in the Museum at Tarves.* What was known as the "Manse" of the Black Friars became the property of Jean Guild, sister of Dr. William Guild, who had married David Anderson, of Finzeauch, a citizen of such remarkable and varied mechanical abilities that he was popularly known as Davie do a'thing.† In

* Walker. Robert Gordon, his Hospital, and his College, p. 11. The Silver heart is still in the Museum at Tarves. It was bequeathed to the parish by the late Mr. Melvin, school-master, Tarves. So interesting a relic should have its story preserved in an inscription card, or otherwise, in the Museum.

† Davie was a cousin of that Alexander Anderson, Professor of Mathematics in the University of Paris, who was author of a multitude of works on Algebra and the other exact sciences. "Of him the unfailing translator of Rabelais says that he 'was for his abilities in the mathematical sciences accounted the profoundliest principled of any man of his time.'" John Hill Burton. *Scot Abroad*, p. 312. Davie's daughter Janet married John Gregory, Minister of Drumoak, and transmitted the mechanical genius of her father to the still more celebrated family of Gregory. Strange to say, Anderson's son was an idiot. The best remembered exploit of Davie do a'thing was his removal of a troublesome rock, "Knock Maitland," from the harbour channel. After every other device had failed, Davie fastened a number of empty barrels to the rock at low water, and we are told that these at high water raised the rock. Davie

1644, this Jean Guild, now a widow, and her relatives mortified "all and haill the said tenement of land, callit the blakfreiris manse, with the yeards, barnes, and pertments, whatsoever, belonging therto, lying at the Schoolhill of the said brugh," along with 4,700 merks, Scots, for the maintenance and education of ten orphan children.* Whether this "manse" had actually formed part of the Black Friars' property may be doubted. In Parson Gordon's day, 1661, none of the buildings that belonged to the order seems to have been in existence—"that Convent of the Dominicans, together with their church, was so industriously razed, January 4th, 1560 [1559], that now ther is nothing of that building to be seen." Could it be possible that Dr. Guild, or Davie do a' thing—who was certainly blamed for sacrilege—or some one connected with them, formed part of those accused by Gordon of raising up "goodlie houses out of its robberies"?

As in the case of the Carmelites, and the Trinity Friars, the memory of the Dominicans is perpetuated in the name of a street near where their monastery and church stood. Blackfriars Street was constructed in the end of the eighteenth century over what had actually been part of the Black Friars' ground. It was in No. 16 Blackfriars Street that, in 1824, was born Dr. Walter C. Smith, son of Walter Smith, is said to have seated himself on the rock as it was being raised from its bed, and floated it triumphantly to the shore. His portrait was painted by Jamesone, who was his nephew.

*Mortifications under the Charge of the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Aberdeen (1849), p. 128.

wright and cabinet-maker, a man who approximates so nearly to George MacDonald, as a poet, but has somehow failed to touch the imagination of the public as George MacDonald did.* The most part of the Black Friars' ground is now occupied by the garden and buildings of Robert Gordon's College, formerly Gordon's Hospital. The story of that institution, founded by a nephew of that "Parson" Gordon to whom, as its earliest historian and topographer, Aberdeen owes so much, is now freely available for all interested in the historical institutions of the city.†

Mention of Blackfriars Street reminds one that some historical interest attaches to the other street-names in this immediate neighbourhood. Back Wynd—formerly Westerkirkgate (*i.e.*, the Western Kirk-Road), extending along the western side of St. Nicholas Churchyard from Schoolhill to Union Street, has already received attention.‡ It is enough to repeat here that it was laid out by the Magistrates, and

* Dr. Walter C. Smith, it will be remembered, was greatly admired by Mr. Gladstone, who offered him a baronetcy.

† See Robert Anderson, *History of Robert Gordon's Hospital, Aberdeen, 1729-1881*; also, Alexander Walker, *Robert Gordon, 1665-1731, His Hospital, 1750-1876, and His College, 1880*. As this work is passing through the press, my attention is called to the doubt that exists as to whether the central portion of Gordon's College is really Gibbs' design (p. 60). William Adam, of Edinburgh, was asked to prepare a plan and to oversee the work, and that certainly looks as if the adopted design were his.

‡ See *Historical Aberdeen : The Green and Its Story*, p. 24.

opened in 1594. Previous to that date the ground west of St. Nicholas Churchyard, now covered by Back Wynd, Belmont Street, and Little Belmont Street, was arable land, part of which belonged to the Black Friars under a charter of 1374. Even before the Back Wynd was completed, however, feuing stances on the projected street had been given off by public auction, so pressing was the necessity for an extension of the town.* Like the older Narrow Wynd, that forms part of the site of the present Municipal Buildings, the Back Wynd gave its name to one of the old Friendly Societies of Aberdeen, dissolved on 11th March, 1828.

The naming of Belmont Street seems to have been the beginning of a modern evil fashion of applying pretty but meaningless names to the streets of the burgh. The descriptive names in the older Scottish burghs are a source of endless interest. In Aberdeen, the name of every street, up to this time, had a definite and intelligible application—the Ship Row, Castle-gate, the Broad-gate, Gallow-gate, Guest [ghaist] Row, Schoolhill, Causeway-end, the two Kirk-gates, and the like. Belmont may have been specially appropriate, but as applied, say, to the neighbouring Woolmanhill, is hardly according to the genius of local speech. No doubt, Belmont has been a favourite name since the days of “The Merchant of Venice,” but its appearance as a street name in Aberdeen more than a century ago is a little odd, and was

* This was in 1590. Council Register, Vol. XXXVII., p. 140.

doubtless merely a local application of a fanciful general name. The construction of Belmont Street—or Bellmount, as it was sometimes written—began in 1784, when funds obtained from the sale of land to the Earl of Kintore were applied to the improvement of what was known as the Caberstone Croft, on which were laid out this street and Little Belmont Street.* Belmont Street was first made from the Schoolhill end, and for about twenty years extended only part of the way towards Union Street.† By 1791 a Relief Chapel had been built at the corner of Belmont Street and Little Belmont Street, and on 11th August of that year a petition from that Chapel was given in to the Presbytery of Aberdeen praying to be received back into the Established Church, and “the said Chapel was that day received by the Presbytery as a Chapel of Ease within the Establishment, and their Minister received as a Minister of the Church of Scotland.”‡ In those days the Belmont Street Chapel had both a manse and garden attached to it. These amenities suffered when Union Street was opened in 1803, and Belmont Street was then carried all the way to the new street—rising somewhat at the south end, as it still does, in order to join the higher level of Union Street.

* Records of Marischal College, I., p. 243.

† The distance is well shown in Milne’s Map of Aberdeen, 1790.

‡ A certified copy of this Petition of 1791 is in the possession of Rev. W. D. Scott, the present minister of the South Parish Church, to whom I am indebted for a transcript, as above.

One remembers that in Belmont Street, in the tall house erected at the corner of it and Union Street, resided Archibald Simpson, architect, on his removal from Guestrow ; also, that another remarkable citizen, Dr. James Melvin, Master of the Grammar School, on removing from Gallowgate, lived for many years in Belmont Street, and died there, a worn and disappointed old man. It was in Belmont Street, also, in the office of Newell Burnett, advocate, that John Hill Burton began his law apprenticeship, and although he does not appear to have taken kindly to the drudgery of that office, he must have been then developing the taste for antiquarian and historical research that so distinguished the Historiographer Royal.

Before this time, however, the old Relief Chapel had been cleared away. On its site arose the present South Parish Church, the work of another eminent Aberdeen architect, John Smith, of an individuality as marked as Archibald Simpson, and like Simpson had a very large share in giving character to the modern city. The South Parish was formed, with the other five city parishes, in 1828, from the old Parish of St. Nicholas, and the present church was built in 1830.* The School in Little Belmont Street, also a town school, and also the work of Smith, was opened in 1841 ; and two years later Archibald Simpson began the construction

* A plate engraving of the new South Parish Church was given in the Aberdeen Magazine—the series edited by Joseph Robertson—Vol. I., 1831.

of the group of Free Churches at the Schoolhill end of Belmont Street, which are our most striking memorial of the Disruption year in Aberdeen.* To make way for that group of Churches, the old Schoolhill Factory, owned by Gordon, Baron, & Coy., had to be demolished. It was in this factory that William Thom, the gifted and unfortunate "Inverurie Poet," worked as boy and man for seventeen years. "According to Thom's own representation, the factory was at this time beyond all description as a hot-bed of vice and sorrow; and it would have been nothing short of a miracle if he had escaped himself unscathed. That he did not escape, and that all the subsequent weaknesses and sins which mar too sadly the pathetic record of his life are to be traced back to the Schoolhill Factory, can only become too apparent to the student of his life."†

Till twenty years ago, a few steps from this north end of Belmont Street carried one into the strangely-named Mutton Brae, which lay on the south-western slope of the hill, and served for a hundred years as a thoroughfare from the Schoolhill to the Denburn

* The grouping of these churches, and the use of brick as the building material, arose, necessarily, from reasons of economy—an actual fulfilling of Thomas Pennant's remarks, mistaken in that case, on the St. Nicholas Churches, in 1767—"The East and West Churches are under the same roof, for the North Britons observe economy even in their religion." *Tour in North Britain*, p. 119.

† John Forbes Robertson, in *Thom's Rhymes and Recollections* (ed. 1880), pp. vi.-vii.

Valley. Throughout most of its history this was really a misplaced slum of the city. It was inhabited in the earlier years of the century by many of those employed at the neighbouring factory—(Thom, after his marriage, lived in the equally wretched Spa Street, at the other end of Woolmanhill)—and it was also, as Buchanan tells, the place of abode of many of the “characters” that were then so numerous in Aberdeen.* How it came to be named the Mutton Brae can only be guessed at—possibly, because it was a pasturage for sheep before it became covered with dwellings. We are told that in 1693 the grass in that neighbourhood was “eaten up and destroyed by flocks of sheep,” and Mr. William Walker remembers “an old citizen who used to relate that when a boy he was wont to go to a small crofter at the top of Belmont Street for milk, and that, further on, the wooded banks of the hill had not altogether disappeared.”† Be that as it may, the Mutton Brae had a distinctive character for many years. What seems to have been the first house built in the locality dated from 1749. On 5th April of that year the Town Council granted a site for a house to George Smith, blacksmith, “upon the piece of ground lying on the south side of the Schoolhill of Aberdeen, at the west end of the houses belonging to the heirs of John Wagrels.”‡ The construction of the Denburn Junction Railway, 1863-7, took away the

* *Glimpses of Olden Days in Aberdeen*, p 24.

† *Bards of Bon-Accord*, p. 54.

‡ *Council Register*. Vol. LXI., p. 382.

lower portion of the Mutton Brae, and it was finally swept away in 1885-9 by the construction of the Rosemount Viaduct.*

* Pictures of the Mutton Brae, while still covered with dwellings, are, fortunately, still available. A photographic view may be seen in the Central Reading Room of the Public Library. Baillie Kemp possesses another—rather earlier, if I remember rightly ; and an illustration of Mutton Brae, showing also the Belmont Street Churches, appears as frontispiece to Bulloch's Centenary Memorials of the First Congregational Church in Aberdeen.

THE WOOLMANHILL.

II.

IN the early records pertaining to the Woolmanhill one finds it, as often as not, set down as the “Womanhill,” but this is a form of the name that would puzzle only for a moment. Obviously, it is due to the habit of dropping “l” after the vowels, giving “Woo’manhill” instead of the proper name, and this corruption very naturally crept into the written registers. William Forsyth—who will be recognised one day, doubtless, as the poet of Aberdeen—appreciated the circumstance when he wrote—

“The Woo’man Hill wis ae green knowe,
An’ up the Denburn’s bonny bank,
The playgrun’ lay in Gilcom’s Howe,
The scene o’ mony a merry prank.”*

As the name of the Woolmanhill was, in the strictest sense, descriptive, no commencement of its use can be traced, for the name had been in ordinary use long before written references are available. We learn from it the character of one of the principal

*“The Midnight Meetin’.” It ought to be said that while this illustrates Forsyth’s keenness on a philological point, the quatrain is not to be taken as in any sense, a worthy example of his poetry.

articles of trade in Aberdeen from the earliest years of the burgh. It has been already shown that in the first Edward's reign 56½ sacks of wool formed part of the export cargo of an Aberdeen ship that fell a prey to buccaneering Englishmen.* In the national records entries occur from an early date relative to the wool trade of Aberdeen,† and as soon as the Aberdeen records begin the wool trade is found to form, naturally, the subject of local enactment. Thus, in 1410, the Common Council and the greater part of the merchants of the burgh pass an ordinance that the price of wool from Mar, Buchan, and the Garioch is not to exceed a stated price, under penalty.‡ Doubtless, enactments of the same kind had been passed for many a year. And in all this we have as clear a view as may be of what took place: the graziers of the rural and upland districts fetching their supplies of wool periodically to the Woolmanhill of Aberdeen, a suitable and convenient market place just outside the burgh, and the traders of the port operating in the commodity with the rich, thickly populated towns and districts of the Low Countries. This traffic in the raw material was a precursor of the important trade in woollen manufactured goods carried on by Aberdeen in later centuries. Many large fortunes were amassed by Aberdonians abroad, who acted often, it must be said, as little better than

**Supra.* p. 2.

†See, relative to a claim concerning Aberdeen wool, Exchequer Rolls of Scotland (1340), I., pp. 465, 472.

‡ Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., pp. 386-7.

pack-merchants, arousing alike the jealous fear and the scorn of Continental competitors.* And so, as a natural growth, the name of Woolmanhill suited the place, and although the wool market of Aberdeen has not been held on the Woolmanhill for the last three centuries at least, and is itself, indeed, a thing of the past, the name is still historically appropriate and interesting.†

While it was still, probably, the site of the wool market, the Woolmanhill was the scene also of those remarkable Miracle Plays which were enacted with more or less regularity in Aberdeen for, at least, more than a hundred years prior to the Reformation. In certain European towns a complete developement of these plays may have been seen—from the merely dumb representation of characters in the strictly

*See the recent researches of H. A. Fischer, which throw much light on the operations of Scotch traders abroad in the sixteenth century.—*The Scots in Germany: Being a Contribution towards the History of the Scot Abroad, 1902*; *the Scots in Eastern and Western Prussia, a Sequel to the Scots in Germany, 1903*.

†Akin to its use as the site of the wool market was the use of part of the Woolmanhill for bleaching purposes. What seems to have been the last of the bleachfields—which lay on the west side of the Woolmanhill—was added to the Infirmary ground in 1748. The Wool Market continued to be an annual event in Aberdeen until comparatively recent years, but latterly as a very much decayed institution. This is how an Aberdeen newspaper disposed of the Wool Market of 1853—“An apology for a Wool Market was held here yesterday. There was no business done worth noticing.”—*The Aberdeen Herald, 2nd July, 1853.*



The Mutton Brae.

religious services, or with the added recitation of the simplest devotional utterances, to the more elaborate liturgical drama and ecclesiastical pageant, all under the supervision of the Church ; thence, to the Miracle, or Morality Plays, which gradually fell into the hands of the trade guilds, supervised—in Aberdeen, at least—by officials directly appointed on behalf of the community, and paid a stated fee. We have no record of such a developement of the play in Aberdeen. How far the Church was concerned in the early representations here it seems now impossible to discover. Our first reference to the plays, in 1440, occurs in the Council Register, and that circumstance of itself indicates—what, indeed, was the case—that by this date the Miracle Play had ceased to be, in any strict sense, a religious representation. In Aberdeen, as in other towns, it had passed by this time, as John Addington Symonds says, from the cloister to the market-place, and become emphatically a popular observance, the chief holiday event in the district.

A curious little point arises in connection with this first mention of the Miracle Play. The Master of the Revels, in Aberdeen, went by the name of Abbot, or Prior, of Bon-Accord—sometimes by the more widely known title of the Abbot of Unreason. The drama, or passion-play,* enacted in those years was the play

* It is perhaps needless to recall that the only surviving representation of a Miracle Play is that at Oberammergau, in the Bavarian Alps, where it is performed every tenth year as a religious service, in grateful fulfilment of a vow of 1633 for the removal of plague from the neighbourhood.

of the Holy Blood—"ludo de ly Haliblude,"* performed in that year, 1440, "apud ly Wyndmylhill." The Windmillhill has been too readily accepted as meaning the Porthill—doubtless from the fact that in Parson Gordon's day, 1661, the Porthill was "most ordinerlie" so named. But all other references point to the Woolmanhill as the scene of the diversions, which afforded a fine open space in the neighbourhood of the Church, and where, indeed, the "Play-field" actually was from a very early date.† To the Woolmanhill, then, the processions of the trades found their way year after year, with banners flying, the town's minstrels accompanying on their instruments, and the principal characters on horseback, suitably, often grotesquely, apparellled.

The earliest reference to these plays, of date 13th May, 1440, is concerned with the allowance made by the Council to Richard Kintor, for his expenses as Abbot of Bon-Accord for that year. It is clear, however, that by this time the degeneracy in connection with the Miracle Play had occasioned misgivings, for in 1445 "it was concludit, statute, and ordanit be the commoun counsaile, and mony othir of the gilde, for letting [staying] and stanching of diverse enormytes done in tyme bygane be the abbotis of this burgh,

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 395.

† In the licence granted to George Jamesone, in 1635, to construct a garden at the Woolmanhill, reference is made to "the playfeild belongeing to the toune whair comedies were wont to be actit of auld besyde the Well of Spa." Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc., I., p. 75.

callit of bone acorde, that in tyme to cum thai will give na feis [fees] to na sic abbotis."* Naturally, this was not a popular course, and for a long time thereafter the appointment of the Abbot and Prior of Bon-Accord continued to be made, and the usual fee of five merks, £3 6s. 8d., Scots, allowed as remuneration. The selection of these officials appears to have been made by the Council on the actual ground at the Woolmanhill. Thus, in 1496—

"The viii day of May, the yer forsaid, the aldirman [Provost], bailzeis, and consale present for the tyme at the Womanhill, for uphaldin of the auld louable consuetud, honour, consolacioun, and plesour of this burghe, lik as hes bene usit in tymes of thar worthie progenitoris, chesit Thomas Leslie and Robert of Cullane, conjunctlie abbotis and priour of Bonacord, tile vyse [use] and exercie the said office this instant yer, and grantit to pay thame v merkis common gudis this tyme tuelf moneth."†

In the early years of the sixteenth century, the decadence of the plays having, doubtless, gone steadily on, the quasi-religious aspect was wholly abandoned. The Abbot and Prior thenceforward became the Lords of Bon-Accord, and the comedy of Robin Hood was substituted for the religious drama. On 17th November, 1508, public intimation was made by the hand bell of a public ordinance "that all personis, burges, nichtbouris, and inhabitaris, burges sonnys, habill to ryd, to decor [decorate] and honor the towne in thar array conveinant thereto, sall ryd with Robert

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 14.

† Ibid., p. 59.

Huyid and Litile Johne, quhilk was callit, in yeris by past, Abbot and Prior of Bon-Accord, one every Sanct Nicholas day, throw the towne, as use and wont hes bene," and this under penalty, on those that "wil not rid," of twenty shillings to St. Nicholas work, and eight shillings to the Baillies.* As the years wore on, the more honourable class in the community withdrew more and more from what had become simply recurrent scenes of debauchery. It became necessary to practically compel acceptance of the chief positions in the representation of the play, and in 1531, at a sitting of the Council, letters from the king, actually, were submitted, to the effect that none of the burghers, relative to this matter, "suld refuss whatesomever office of honor thai happen to be chosin to," under penalty, and it was duly resolved "gin ony of the saids parteis refuset the said office [of Lords of Bon-Accord], that our soureigns lords lettres suld be execut on thame in the charpest maner quhilk the said counsall and commonitie thocht expedient to be done."† As the great change of the Reformation more nearly approached, religious differences may have accentuated the utter disrepute into which the play was falling. A husband and wife were accused, in 1542, of "strubling" Alexander Gray and David Kintoir, Lords of Bon-Accord, by incontinently declaring them and their company to be nothing but "common beggaris and

* Council Register. Quoted, Turreff's Antiquarian Gleanings, pp. 70-1.

† Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., pp. 140-1.

skafferis," that they were of small account for all their cuttit-out hose—with many other injurious words not to be printed.* What appears to have been the last occasion on which the Lords of Bon-Accord received any public, official, countenance was in 1552, when they received a specially liberal allowance for their fee in respect of the greater expenses they had incurred "be ressoun of cumyng of the quenis grace, my lord governor, and the maist of the lords and grit men of this realme, presently to this toun."† The "quenis grace" on that occasion meant Mary of Guise, the Roman Catholic Queen-Mother, who would naturally be tolerant of ancient institutions of the kind represented by the Abbot and the Prior. But murmurs of the coming change were already to be heard. In 1555, three years after that visit of the Queen-Mother to Aberdeen, the Scottish Parliament passed the notable Act by which it was "statute and ordanit that in all tymes cumming na maner of persoun be chosin Robert Hude, nor Lytill Johne, Abbot of unreason, Quenis of May, nor vtherwyse nouther in Burgh nor to landwart in ony tyme to cum. And gif ony Provest, Baillies, Counsall and communite chesis sic ane Personage as Robert Hude, Lytill Johne, Abbottis of vnreasoun or Quenis of May within Burgh the chesaris of sic sall tyne thair fredome for the space of fyve zeires and vtherwyse salbe punist."‡ For some strange reason the Act of Parliament suppressing the

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 180.

† Ibid, p. 280.

‡ Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland, II., p. 500.

Miracle Plays appears to have been ignored in Aberdeen for a period of ten years, and processions of the craftsmen on Corpus Christi appear to have taken place as before. However, on 14th May, 1565, intimation was made in the customary way, "throw all the rewis and gettis of this toune," that none of the burghers was to take on himself to make any convention, "with taburne plaing, or pype, or fedill," or to convene the Queen's lieges in choosing of Robin Hood, Little John, Abbot of Unreason, Queen of the May, "or siclyke contraveyne the statutis of parliament."* A few hot-headed craftsmen attempted to keep up the old observances, but found themselves warded in the Tolbooth, and this was the end of the representations which had gathered the populace to the Woolmanhill for so many years. Aberdeen saw no more of the drama until the memorable occasion in 1601 when Laurence Fletcher's company, with which Shakespeare was associated at the Globe Theatre, came to the town with King James's special recommendation, and delighted some, at least, of the burghers with their "comedies and stage playes."†

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 459.

† The question has often been discussed, relative to this visit of Laurence Fletcher's company to Aberdeen, whether Shakespeare accompanied them. Charles Knight, and others, not only maintained that he did, but that he got his "local colour" for Macbeth from the records of the witch prosecutions in Aberdeen. All the evidence, one regrets to say, is against the view that Shakespeare came with Fletcher on that occasion. Fletcher, and others with him, were admitted burgesses of guild, and their

It was in 1620 that George Jamesone, long familiar by name as the Scottish Vandyke, returned from Antwerp, and began the practice of his art as a portrait painter in his native town of Aberdeen. He had been a student, along with Vandyke, in the studio of Reubens, and before very long had established himself not merely as the greatest Scottish, but as the first native British, portrait painter of the highest rank. The appearance of an artist of such accomplishments as Jamesone, the son and grandson of a stone-mason, in an inartistic town like Aberdeen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has often seemed to partake of the marvellous.* But there was really nothing of the marvellous in it. The wind bloweth where it listeth. The love of art was there, somehow. The means of prosecuting the study was there, for Jamesone's parents were comparatively well-to-do, and the opportunity was provided in the close

names are duly inscribed in the Council Register. The name of Shakespeare was hardly likely to be omitted, if he had been there.

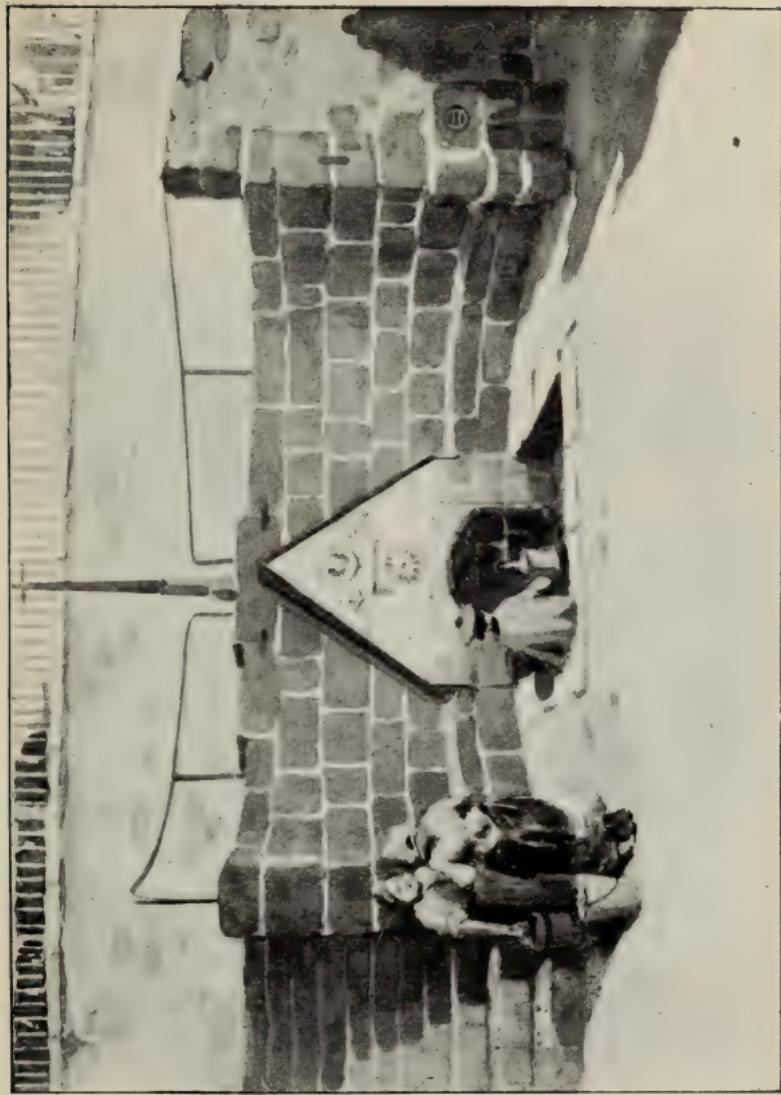
*John Hill Burton, himself an Aberdonian, was much exercised over the phenomenon. "His father was a burgess of guild of the city of Aberdeen, his mother the daughter of a baillie thereof. What peculiar train of circumstances can have induced people of this kind, shortly after the end of the sixteenth century, to send their son abroad to study art, it is difficult to conceive; and if it was from the pure impulse of enlightened ambition it may be counted that this worthy couple were two centuries before their age. I am not sure that at this day an Aberdeen baillie would consider it quite consistent with sanity to send a son to Antwerp to be educated as a painter." *The Scot Abroad*, p. 442.

commercial relations that then existed between Aberdeen and those Flemish cities that were then pre-eminent alike in commerce and the arts.

Anyhow, Jamesone returned to Aberdeen, and for years resided in the Schoolhill, in the ancient, turreted building, overlooking the churchyard, that was demolished only twenty years ago. This will long be remembered as one of the most picturesque of the older buildings of the town, and although its history was by no means so remarkable as was often supposed — for it was said, by turns, to have been the Manse of St. Nicholas, the Bishop's Palace, the residence of Mary Queen of Scots (her bed was sometimes shown), and the prison of Samuel Rutherford—still, its close association with the great painter, and its own appearance, should have saved it as an interesting historical relic for the community.

A few steps from his own house carried Jamesone to the Woolmanhill, and here he was attracted to the little Well of Spa, that ran near the ancient play-field, at the foot of the western slope. The curative effects of the well had, in Jamesone's day, brought it into some celebrity. As early as 1580 it was the subject of a curious little work, "Ane Breif descriptioun of the qualiteis and effectis of the vvell of the vwoman-hill besyde Abirdene," produced in Edinburgh, and telling of the virtues that had been observed in the waters of that well in the immediately preceding years.* Then in 1615, while Jamesone was still at

*The "Breif descriptioun," of 1580, was reprinted by the Bannatyne Club in 1860. A very beautiful fac-simile reprint of



The Well of Spa.

Prior to its removal to its present site.

his studies, came another little work from the Edinburgh press—for Aberdeen could not boast a printer till 1622—entitled “Callirhoe, The Nymph of Aberdeen, Resvscitat by William Barclay, M. of Art, and Doctor of Physicke. What diseases may be cured by drinking of the Well at Aberdene, and what is the true vse thereof.”* According to the reprint of that curious tract, George Jamesone tried the waters, with good effect, and the very practical interest he showed in restoring the fountain and beautifying its surroundings arose from “the many proofs he had of it in his own person in cureing him of the stone.” At anyrate, in 1635 Jamesone submitted a petition to the Magistrates and Town Council

“ Makand mentioun, that for sameikle as a greate pairt of the play feild belonging to the toune whair comedies were wont to be actit of auld besyde the Well of Spa, is spoilled, brockin, and caret away be speat and inundation of watter, and is lyabill to the same danger and inconvenient heireftir, so that unless some course be taikin to withstand suche speattis and invndationunes, the whole play field, within a short space of tyme will allui.

the tract, limited to 276 copies, quarto, was produced in Aberdeen in 1884. It was there said that the “Breif descriptioun” “is believed to be the earliest topographical tract connected with Scotland,” and it would be very interesting if the Well of Spa had this distinction. Unfortunately, it is not anything like the case. A feature of the fac-simile reprint is the remarkably fine sketch (frontispiece) by Mr. Arthur Clyne, F.R.I.B.A., of the Well of Spa as it was then, before its removal to its present site in the back wall of the Infirmary.

*Reprinted in Aberdeen, by John Forbes, younger, in 1670, and again by Burnett & Rettie, in 1799.

terlie decay, and serwe for no wse ; and the said George tacking notice of the tounes prejudice heirin, and withall havand consideratioun how this little plott of ground may be vsefull to the toune heirefter, out of his naturall affectioun to this his native citie, he is content upon his awin chairges, not onlie to mak some fortificatioune to withstand the violence of the speattis in tyme coming, bot lykewayes to mak some policie and planting within and about the said play feild for the publict vse and benefitt of the toune."*

Accordingly, he asked liberty of the authorities to lay out what was altogether a new kind of pleasure ground in Scotland, which, obviously, demanded for its appreciation a public taste that had no existence for many a long year afterwards. It was, as John Hill Burton has pointed out, a transplantation of a Flemish fashion, that could hardly have flourished in the north-east of Scotland—especially at that time, when Aberdeen was rent by rival religious sects, and was soon to be the theatre of a civil war. But his offer was gladly accepted by the authorities. He received "a lease and tack" of the old four-square play field, and thereupon he began to transform that portion of the old Woolmanhill. Not only did he plant his public garden ; he renovated the Well of Spa, "and put a tomb of hewn stone over it," and decorated it with his own hand. Doubtless the burghers would have preferred their grassy play field, with, perhaps, a little of the revelry that was usual there in ancient times. Within ten years George

*Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc., I., pp. 74-6.

Jamesone was dead, and in 1645, the year after his death, the play field and the garden, which had become “vnprofitable,” were feued out to Jamesone’s son-in-law for four pounds, Scots, of feu duty yearly. The Well of Spa was repeatedly renovated after Jamesone’s time, and remains, although in fallen estate, to remind one of an interesting history ; and it was only within the last few years that the wretched slum, known as Garden Nook Close was cleared away, and with it the last trace of the play field and Jamesone’s garden.

It is not possible, in present limits, to review fully the multitude of associations that cluster around the Woolmanhill. One remembers that, in the sixteenth century, it was one of the places where the Wapinschaw took place. Again, it was one of the outer boundaries of the burgh beyond which town’s-people were not to pass for the purchase of country produce if thereby their neighbours were likely to be fore stalled.* Sometimes it was the scene of conflict, as on that occasion, in 1587, when the Laird of Balquhain and his followers were withheld there by the magistrates and citizens in armour.† In 1647,

* On 23rd August, 1626, the Council passed an act “ restraining the nichbouris of the toun to pas beyond the Bowbrigg, Wollmanhill, and outwith the Gallowgate port, to by any fir comeing to this burgh to be sauld,” but the act passed unheeded, and it was re-affirmed, and published by tuck of drum through “the haill streitis of the toun,” with certain additions to it, in 1632. Extracts from the Council Register. Burgh Rec. Soc., I., p. 49.

† Sum Notabill Thinges, p. 22.

huts were erected in the Woolmanhill as an outlet for a town stricken by the plague, a frequent and devastating visitant. Between 1400 and 1647 we have a record of no fewer than thirty-two distinct visitations of the plague in Aberdeen. On that last occasion it broke out at Pitmuxton, having been brought thither by a woman from Brechin. The inhabitants were convened by the Magistrates and Council in the Greyfriars Kirk, and the customary (ineffectual) steps taken to stay the spread of the infection, but through most part of the year the trouble raged virulently. On this account no meetings of the Town Council were held between 26th May and 11th August, when a meeting of the Council was held at the Woolmanhill. Thereafter, no meeting took place till the day of election, in September, which was held still further afield on the Crofts of Gilcomston, for the Woolmanhill seems to have been no longer safe. It is said that no fewer than 1760 of the inhabitants of the town and suburbs were carried off in that dreadful time, in spite of all that could be done "for the weill and saiftie of the distrest toun."*

Up till nearly the middle of the eighteenth century the Woolmanhill remained really outside the burgh. By that time Scotland was awakening to the merits of the Hospital system for the treatment of the sick. In 1736 the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh was incorpor-

* "Such was the panic, that from September, 1647, to January, 1648, divine service was not performed in St. Nicholas Church, and the classes of the Universities were removed to Fraserburgh and Peterhead."—Book of Bon-Accord, p. 325.

ated. Three years later a movement was started successfully with the view of founding a similar institution in Aberdeen. Woolmanhill was selected as the site, the Magistrates and Council granting the necessary ground, and on New Year's Day, 1740, the foundation stone of the Infirmary was laid where the Royal Infirmary still stands, and in little more than two years thereafter the new building was opened for patients.

But that was only the beginning of changes in the district. Beyond the Woolmanhill stretched the hamlet of Gilcomston, one of the most ancient suburbs of Aberdeen. The very name takes us back to the twelfth century, and its mixture of Celtic and Saxon is an indication, at least, of the racial character of the inhabitants of the Aberdeen neighbourhood as the light of history begins to dawn. The dubiety that has long existed as to the origin of the name Gilcomston, is amusingly illustrated in a fifty-year old "Survey" of the city.

"Going northward [from Woolmanhill] through Skene Square you may notice, within a garden on your left, Gilcomston, viz.—the stone from which this suburb has its name. Some will have this 'Gilcom' to have been one thing and some another; the truth is, few or none can tell whether he was 'saint, sage, or savage.' The stone stands about seven feet above the ground and there is another smaller one at a shorter distance. They appear to have been of Druidical erection."*

No doubt at all the stones were there; they are noted by more accurate historians than Mr. Courage,

* Archibald Courage. A Brief Survey of Aberdeen (1853 and 1856), pp. 37-8.

and many a year before his day,* and we have them duly set out, “2 stones of 6 and 12 feet high,” in Paterson’s Map of 1746. But they had nothing to do with the name of Gilcomston. Gil—or, Gille—Colm’s-town was the village, or hamlet of Gilcolm, a Celtic name that, broken up into its constituent parts, would represent the son, or servant, of Colm, or Columba. But there is no need to break it up, as Gilcolm was evidently the form of the personage’s name when he gave his name to Gilcolm’s-town.† As to who this Gilcolm was, there is hardly room for doubt. In the Book of Deer we have a charter, of date 1131-1132, and the witnesses to it included Nectan, Bishop of Aberdeen, Ruadri, Mormaer of Mar (from whom Ruadristoun, now Ruthrieston, another early suburb of Aberdeen, has its name), and Gillecolaim, son of Muredach.‡ It can hardly be

* John Major notices the fact in his *History of Greater Britain* (1521), *Scot. Hist. Soc.*, p. 179.

† Mr. David Littlejohn, LL.D., to whom I am indebted for two entries of the name—1608 and 1609—as “*Gelquhomstowne*,” mentions that in going through the centuries of Sheriff Court Records he has found it an invariable rule in the spelling of place-names ending in “ton” that where “—stone” is meant the spelling is always “—stane,” or “—stanis,” and where “—town” is meant the spelling is always “—toun,” or “—toune.”

‡ Book of Deer, pp. 94-5. Quoted, *Antiquities of Aberdeen and Banff* (Orig. Sp. Club), IV., p. 548. Translated also, with certain unimportant variations, by Sir Arch. C. Lawrie, *Early Scottish Charters, Prior to 1153*, p. 78. The Celtic and Saxon elements in the names of Ruthrieston and Gilcomston are noted—for the first time, I think—by Mr. William Watt,

doubted that as Ruadri gave his name to the one suburb, Gillecraig, the other prominent Celtic leader, was the person whose name has been enshrined in the name of Gilcomston for the last eight hundred years.*

It would be very interesting to know what kind of hamlet existed at Gilcomston in the twelfth century, but of that no record has yet been, or is likely to be found. The probability is that the semi-Celtic settlement, such as it was, disappeared wholly as the Celtic element passed away from the immediate neighbourhood of the burgh, leaving only the name, as in so many other places in the vicinity, to tell of what had been.† Our earliest references to Gilcomston tell

History of Aberdeen and Banff, pp. 26, 29. The philological point as to the use of *Gille* bristles with literary associations, from the old ballad, *Gil Morice* [*Childe Maurice*], to "John Splendid," by Mr. Neil Munro. Readers of that brilliant tale will recollect that among the crowds of Highlanders in Inneraora, on the Market-day, were a barbarous looking set of MacLachlans—"a dozen of them in the tail or retinue of old Lachlan's son, a henchman, piper, piper's valet, *Gille-mor*, *Gille-wet-sole*, or running footman, and such others as the more vain of our Highland gentry at the time ever insisted on travelling about with."

* The present spelling of the name Gilcomston might with advantage be changed. The late Dr. Cruickshank, in "Vanishing Aberdeen," used the preferable form, Gilcolmston.

† There is a remarkable absence of Celtic personal names from the earliest records relating to Aberdeen in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, although the Celtic place-names near the burgh had become fixed by that time. Even in the Register of Burgesses, 1399-1631, containing between 5000 and 6000 names of Aberdeen residents, the occurrence of a Celtic name is

merely of agricultural or grazing land, or, among other things, of disputes regarding moss-land in the neighbourhood of boundaries which were always ill-defined.* The property passed through many hands in the middle centuries—the town always keeping a tight hold on at least certain portions of it. In the sixteenth century it was the property of the Gordons of Pitlurg.† In 1632, through a charter granted by John, Earl of Mar, the lands of Gilcomston came into the hands of the notable Aberdeen family, Menzies of Pitfodels, and in 1672 the Scottish Parliament granted a ratification in favour of William Menzies of Pitfodels, to the lands and barony of Pitfodels, “As also all and haill the lands of the toune and lands of Gilkhamstoun, with the milne, milne-lands, multurs, and sequills therof, Togidder with all and sundry toftis, croftis, outsettis, pairs, pendicles, and pertinents of the same.”‡ Only a year afterwards Sir Andrew Fletcher, uncle and tutor of Menzies of Pitfodels, sold the lands

only occasional. The names are, for the most part, territorial, or patronymic, or pertaining to trades and occupations, or from personal qualities.

* Alexander Ross, in his *Antiquity of the City of Aberdeen* (1833), says that “in the year 1399 the Haugh of Gilcomston was set to Matthew Pinks for 8 pounds by the town, and the whole town lands and waters were set yearly at 1400 pence.” Thom, *History of Aberdeen* (1811), I., p. 124, gives a different name, and a different rent, but neither of the two is of the slightest authority except on the general fact.

† *Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, III., p. 196-7, n.

‡ *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, VIII., pp. 166-7.



House of John Phillip, R.A.

No. 13 Skene Square, demolished six years ago. Above the door will be seen the tablet put up by Phillip's friend, William Brodie, sculptor.

of Gilcomston to the town for 26,500 merks, £1472 4s. 5d. sterling. As pertaining to one particular branch of the public revenue or another, Gilcomston remained for many years the property of the town.*

The commencement of the actual feuing of the lands of Gilcomston dates from that eventful period, 1748, when the Town Council enacted "that proper persons be appointed to put the lands of Gilcomstone in several lots as the Council should think proper."† Houses very quickly began to spring up, and by the end of the century there was a considerable village where Upper Denburn and Jack's Brae are still, with the outlying hamlet and quarries of Loanhead, near the present site of Loanhead Terrace. Francis Douglas (1782), called it a "fine village," but those who are familiar with the wretched remains of it will rather agree with Kennedy when he says—"Although the ground on which it [the village of Gilcomston] is built possessed many local advantages favourable for the situation of a town, having a fine sloping exposure to the south-east, with a small stream of water running through it, yet no plan whatever was adopted, either for laying out regular streets, or for building the houses upon any uniform design. The consequence of neglect in this respect has been that the buildings, in general are mean, and very irregular."‡ For many

* Kennedy, who went closely into this matter, gives many interesting particulars of the financial operations relative to Gilcomston. *Annals*, I., p. 320, *et seq.*, 386.

† *Council Register*, Vol. LXI., p. 369.

‡ *Annals*, I., p. 387.

years the village of Gilcomston maintained its air of separateness from the rest of the town,* and indeed it was only in the last half of the nineteenth century, when the tract of ground known as the Belleville nursery began to be cut up and formed into streets, that the suburb became in a real sense a part of the city proper. †

The literary landmarks of the Woolmanhill quarter are more remarkable than in any other single quarter of Aberdeen. It had a few minor poets, who sang their songs mainly to their companions at the loom—for this was very largely a district of weavers until very recent days. ‡ Such was William Sutherland, known as the “Gilcomston poet,” who died in 1825—“a man of extraordinary abilities,” said an Aberdeen newspaper, at the time, “and possessed of accomplishments far superior to his situation in life. An accurate

* In the Aberdeen Directory of 1824-5, a George Street butcher gives his home address as “Jack’s Brae, Gilcomston,” and the newspapers of the thirties speak of “Leadside of Gilcomston.”

† In 1867 a portion of the Gilcomston property was sold to the Baker Incorporation, whence we have Baker Street. On 18th March of that same year the Town Council resolved that the line of road east of property that had been erected near Baker Street by an Association for the Improvement of the Dwellings of the Working Classes, “at Gilcomston,” be named Gilcomston Place, and the cross road between that and Farmers’ Hall Lane, Gilcomston Terrace. See *Aberdeen Journal*, 20th March, 1867.

‡ The street in which hand-loom weaving was last carried on to any extent in Aberdeen was North St. Andrew Street—then Shuttle Street—near the Woolmanhill.

grammarian, an acute metaphysician, a poet of considerable brilliancy and energy, although, [as might be supposed] the poetry of William Sutherland was distinguished more by good sense and correct sentiment than by wildness of fancy or glow of imagination." William Sutherland's work can only be found by diligent search in the "Poet's Corner" of a century ago ; but this was not the case with another Gilcomston poet, John Maclean, whose "Poems and Songs," every now and again appears among the unconsidered trifles at the book auction.* The district produced a novelist, too, in James Maclaren Cobban, recently deceased, one of whose books, "The King of Andaman," imagines the play of Chartist feeling among the weavers of the Gilcomston quarter. Then out of this district went James Perry, son of a builder in the Denburn, to transform English journalism. It was while proprietor and editor of the "Morning Chronicle" that Perry made that remarkable offer to Burns, that he should cease to be an exciseman, and accept a pension to write for the "Morning Chronicle." Burns, it will be remembered, afterwards spoke of this offer gratefully, but fortunately had no hesitation in rejecting it. The whole episode greatly interested Walter Scott, and his version of the story to Lockhart, when Lockhart was engaged on his "Life of Burns," is one of the least known, but not least interesting of Scott's epistles.

"Perry of the 'Morning Chronicle'"—writes Scott to his son-in-law—"through my informer, Mr. Millar (of

* 12mo. pp. 106. Aberdeen : J. Daniel & Co., 1852.

Dalswinton), offered Burns five guineas a week as an occasional correspondent—also guerdon as a reporter and as a general contributor if he would settle in London. He declined it, alleging his excise situation was a certain provision which he did not like to part with. Mr. Millar seemed to think his refusal was rather to be imputed to his reluctance to part with his associates in Dumfries. I think it must have been a natural dislike of regular labour of a literary kind. I think the famous ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled’ first appeared in the ‘Morning Chronicle.’ I remember reading it in that paper announced as being either ‘a song of ancient times, or an imitation by the first of our living poets.’” *

It is a little curious to recall, in this Nelson centenary year, that the only occasion on which Perry consented to issue a second edition of the “Morning Chronicle” was on the arrival of the news of the victory of Trafalgar and the death of Nelson.

While Perry was still conducting the great Whig organ, his native Gilcomston produced a still more remarkable man, John Hill Burton, historian of Scotland—Historiographer Royal, even; but chiefly the friend and delightful companion of every lover of books. He was one of the “mighty book-hunters,” not wholly unlike his own genial Archdeacon who was suspected of reading the books that he collected, and akin, in many particulars to the abnormal Thomas Papaverius. Though his communications about the material wants of life were hazy—“the ideas which he had stored up during his wanderings poured themselves forth as clear and sparkling both in logic and

* Lang’s Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart, II., pp. 12-13. Lockhart’s use of the information may be noted in his Burns, chapter viii.

language, as the purest fountain that springs from a Highland rock." Then hardly less remarkable, either in historical knowledge, or general scholarship, was Dr. Joseph Robertson, whose name appears so frequently in these pages, born in the unpretending house, still standing, No. 37 Woolmanhill. It is strange that in Aberdeen there is no public memorial of this distinguished man.* One remembers that, in company with John Stuart, Robertson originated the Spalding Club—which they very nearly named the Raban Club—and he contributed a vast quantity of the most valuable material which the original Spalding Club published; that he conducted the only magazine ever produced in Aberdeen the contents of which could properly be termed literature;† that he wrote a "guide" to the city which is still a reliable and brilliant history, and a guide-book to the best known part of the county which is still an amusing and informing companion to a reader even furth of Scotland. Naturally, he edited a newspaper, and perhaps, in later, exhausted, days in the Scottish capital, he would look back upon the adventures in the "Aberdeen Observer" as the least satisfactory episodes in his busy, shortened life. Of him in Aberdeen, as of Wren, in St. Paul's, it may be said—"If you seek his

* He is buried in the Dean Cemetery, Edinburgh. Robertson's portrait, with the portraits of others mentioned here, appears in the East Window of the Graduation Hall, Marischal College.

†The Aberdeen Magazine, 1831-2. This was the fourth series of six produced under this title.

monument, look around." Closely contemporaneous with Joseph Robertson, and also from the same quarter, came John Phillip, R.A., the only eminent Aberdonian, so far as the writer recollects, who has been commemorated by an inscribed slab on the house of his birth.* Within a stone-throw of Phillip's house, in Skene Square, was born the last of the remarkable company, Professor Alexander Bain. It was on the verge of the Woolmanhill, near where John Phillip attended school as a child, that Bain worked at the hand-loom, and studied—it can hardly be said of one that was such a distinguished apostle of the philosophy of common-sense that he dreamed dreams. They form a wonderful procession, these men of the Woolmanhill district, Jamesone, Phillip, Melvin, Walter C. Smith, Perry, Burton, Joseph Robertson, Alexander Bain. The work that made them famous was not in every case enduring, but one might hope that it would lead their native city to commemorate their names in some simple, suitable way in the district that gave them birth.

* The first plate on the house, 13 Skene Square, was placed there by Phillip's friend, William Brodie, the sculptor. That house was pulled down six years ago, but fortunately Mr. George Watt, architect, the proprietor of the house erected on the spot, has, with much public spirit, placed a bronze tablet on the new house telling that Phillip's house stood on that site. I wish we could be absolutely certain that Phillip was born here. There can be no doubt that he lived here as a child, but it is suggestive that in the detailed notices of Phillip in the Aberdeen papers at the time of his death, it was said that he was born in Windy Wynd, where his father was a shoemaker. See *Aberdeen Journal*, 6th March, 1867; *Aberdeen Free Press*, 1st March, 1867.

THE GUESTROW

THE GUESTROW.

ABERDEEN stands alone among the larger Scottish towns in having no High Street. We find, no doubt, a curious entry in the Dean of Guild's Accounts that a certain sum was laid out in 1586 in removing "ane gryt mydding" from before Greyfriars Church, on the "hie gatt," but this is a general, not a specific and distinctive name ; and there is certainly to be found in the hands of a few fortunate collectors an extremely rare little book on "Robin Hood's Courtship with Jack Cade's Daughter," issued in 1822, with the imprint of one William Robertson, "High Street, Aberdeen," but that again was only an ingenious trap that was laid by sundry wits of Edinburgh for Pitcairn, of the "Criminal Trials," who believed—until then—that he could not be imposed upon by a fictitious ballad. And, as the city is unique in having no High Street, it is singular also in possessing a Guestrow. The Castlegate, Gallowgate, Causewayend, even Mounthooly, can be matched in other Scottish towns, and the Vennel, that most interesting relic of the old Scoto-French alliance, still exists in Perth, Stirling, Glasgow, Ayr, Dumfries, in the Wee Vennel of which

Burns dwelt before he moved to the cottage in the Millhole Brae, where he breathed his last in 1796.*

This singularity of possession does not, in itself, go very far in the way of solving the meaning of the name "Guestrow," a point that has puzzled many a writer, but it suggests this, at least, that the reason for the name is probably a purely local one. And this, indeed, is the case. One theory that ever and again emerges, as explained in a vivacious sketch of the Aberdeen of the sixteenth century, is that the Guestrow is so named "from the circumstance that it was here that hostelries or houses of entertainment existed—that it was the Guest Raw."† This theory owes its currency really to Kennedy, so interesting, but, unfortunately, so often unreliable, particularly when he ventures far from the Burgh Registers. Of the Guestrow he says very definitely—

"The houses on the west side of the Guestrow belonged to the more respectable inhabitants ; and having

* *La Venelle*, a narrow, mean street. The Vennel, the last of the name in Aberdeen, which ran from Gallowgate to the Lochside, was cleared away on the formation of St. Paul Street in 1841. It had become a wretched slum, the obliteration of which had become a public necessity. An article in an Aberdeen periodical, dealing with a projected improvement in the Gallowgate in 1841, says—"While on this subject we may mention that there is now a prospect of another great improvement being made in the same quarter of the town, by the complete removal of that ancient abode of filth and wretchedness, the Vennel. Part of that lane has already been removed to give room for the East Parish School [now St. Paul Street Public School], and we learn that the improvement will soon be completely carried out." *Monthly Circular* (quoted from *Aberdeen Journal*) January, 1841.

† John Bulloch. *Aberdeen Three Hundred Years Ago*, 1884, p. 19.

superior accommodation to those in the other parts of the town, were generally appropriated to strangers of respectability when they occasionally visited the town. Hence this street derived the name of Guestraw.*

Kennedy is here entirely wrong, and it is not very difficult to see how he fell into the error. If this explanation of the name were correct, Guestrows would be common enough, for Aberdeen, convivial and hospitable as it certainly was in the old days, was not the only Scottish town that entertained strangers. † Then “Guest” Row, as meaning the residence of visitors, implies the local application, in very early days, of a term that came to us through the English usage, and an application in the purely English sense, and it will hardly be contended that the prevalent fashion of going to our “auld enemies of England” for the names of our new streets began quite so long ago. In the third place, the Guestrow never was the recognised place of residence for strangers, and on that ground alone the theory may be dismissed. Kennedy had, no doubt, the visit of the Duke of Cumberland in his mind, and based his conclusion partly on that, and partly on the fact that this erroneous view of the name of the Guestrow was the current theory in his own day. Very curious evidence of this may be found in the “Travels” of Rev.

* Annals. I., p. 274 *n.*

† Don Pedro de Ayala, writing to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, in 1498, has the following reference to the Scots—“They like foreigners so much that they dispute with one another as to who shall have and treat a foreigner in his house.” Francisque Michel—Critical Inquiry into the Scottish Language, p. 49 *n.*

James Hall, of London, who visited the north of Scotland "by a new route" in the opening years of last century. Hall was struck by the remarkable hospitality of the Aberdonians, and he tells some droll stories of the convivial ways of even the magistrates of the time. But his own quarters he considered objectionable, and for a curious reason, for in discussing changes in the names of London streets for what he considered more pleasing ones, he says—

"Something of this kind happened to me when in Aberdeen; for, when in my own mind I had fixed on lodgings, yet I did not take them, though neat and every way to my mind, because they were in the street called the Guest's Row, not choosing my letters to be sent to me directed to a place having such a name. It is astonishing that the proprietors do not procure an Act, at least of the Town Council, for changing its name." *

So thought the Walthamstow preacher, but fortunately no "Act" of the kind has ever been attempted; and it may be hoped that nothing will be done to obliterate a name that, properly understood, is the key to a whole series of historical associations.

In the first place, then, it will be noted that the Guestrow is situated among other early streets of Aberdeen, the name of every one of which is strictly descriptive. East of it is Broad Street, formerly the Broadgate, leading into the Gallowgate; at the north end of it is the Upperkirkgate, in one sense memorable as the place of lodgment of Samuel Rutherford during his banishment to Aberdeen in the middle of

* *Travels in Scotland, 1807*; I., p. 316.

the seventeenth century ; and at the south end of the Guestrow is the Netherkirkgate. With regard to the names of these adjoining streets, Kennedy gives what is perhaps the worst explanation that was ever penned in local history, and, with this, one is glad to be done with pointing out errors in his "Annals," a work so generally meritorious, and almost worthy of the remark of a witty Glasgow critic, that if a supplementary chapter had been added about other parts of the country, Kennedy's "Annals of Aberdeen" would have been an admirable history of Scotland! "These streets," says Kennedy, speaking of the Castlegate, Broadgate, Gallowgate, and the others mentioned, "were properly called gates, from the circumstance of there being a port or gate near the extremity of each, except the Broadgate, which was distinguished in ancient times as a continuation of the Gallowgate."* But the "gate" in the street names has no connection whatever with the "port or gate" which certainly did exist near the extremity of each of them. It is the old Scotch word "gait," meaning road, which Kennedy might have learned from Burns, if he had been in the habit of reading poetry, which he probably was not,† or from Parson Gordon, who was quite explicit in dealing with those very streets of Aberdeen more than a hundred and fifty years before.‡ So,

* *Annals, I.*, p. 274 *n.*

† As market days are wearin' late,
And folk begin to tak' the gate.

—“*Tam o' Shanter.*”

‡ “There are two other streets, which, through two gates, goe downward from the Broad Street to the great church. The one

Castlegate is really the “gait” or road to the Castle ; Broadgate, the broad street ; Upperkirkgate, the upper road to the kirk ; and Netherkirkgate, the lower one. The last two names in Aberdeen correspond precisely to the Overgate and Nethergate of Dundee ; indeed, it is not unusual to find, in reference to Upperkirkgate, the names “Ovir Kirkgate,” “Over Kirkgate,” “Ower Kirkgate,” and so on, in the older records and charters of the city.*

The bearing of this on the meaning of the name Guestrow is evident. The burghers of the early centuries were distinguished above most things for their plain good-sense, and in naming a street they did not bestow any formal or fantastic title. Indeed, it may be doubted if in the quite remarkably complete series of Burgh Registers in Aberdeen, stretching away back to 1398, a single example will be found, prior to the eighteenth century, of the formal naming of any street by the Town Council. The names grew, as it were, by simple usage, and so nature led, as usual, to a right result in the application of purely descriptive names to the streets of the burgh. The road to the ships was the Ship Raw—the Rue, or Street, of the old French relationship ; Vicus Viridis, or Greengate, was the road to the Green at the Denburnside ; Exchequer Raw was the street of the Mint—and so with the Castlegate, the Gallowgate, and the other of them is called the Upper Kirk Gate or street, the other the Nether Kirk Gate or street.” Description of Both Touns, p. 14.

* See Records of Marischal College and University, Mortifications under the charge of Town Council (1849), etc.

“gates” already mentioned. The Guestrow did not stand in this respect alone. Its situation gave it its title. It stood on the high ground over-looking “the great church,” as Parson Gordon called it, or, more strictly speaking, overlooking the churchyard, and was the street where, according to the simple ideas of the times, the ghosts of the dead could be seen in their nightly walks. And so the Guestrow becomes the Ghaist Row—and with this name it falls exactly into its place with the other early streets, and gives us, at the same time, a glimpse of the attitude of mind of the Aberdonians of the early days. All this, of course, is no new discovery. So long ago as 1839, Joseph Robertson pointed out Kennedy’s error in regard to the name of the Guestrow, noting that in charters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was set down as *Vicus Lemurum*, Road of the Spirits, and later researches have served to confirm what at that time was only very guardedly put.*

But there is another problem connected with the Guestrow, more difficult by far than the problem of

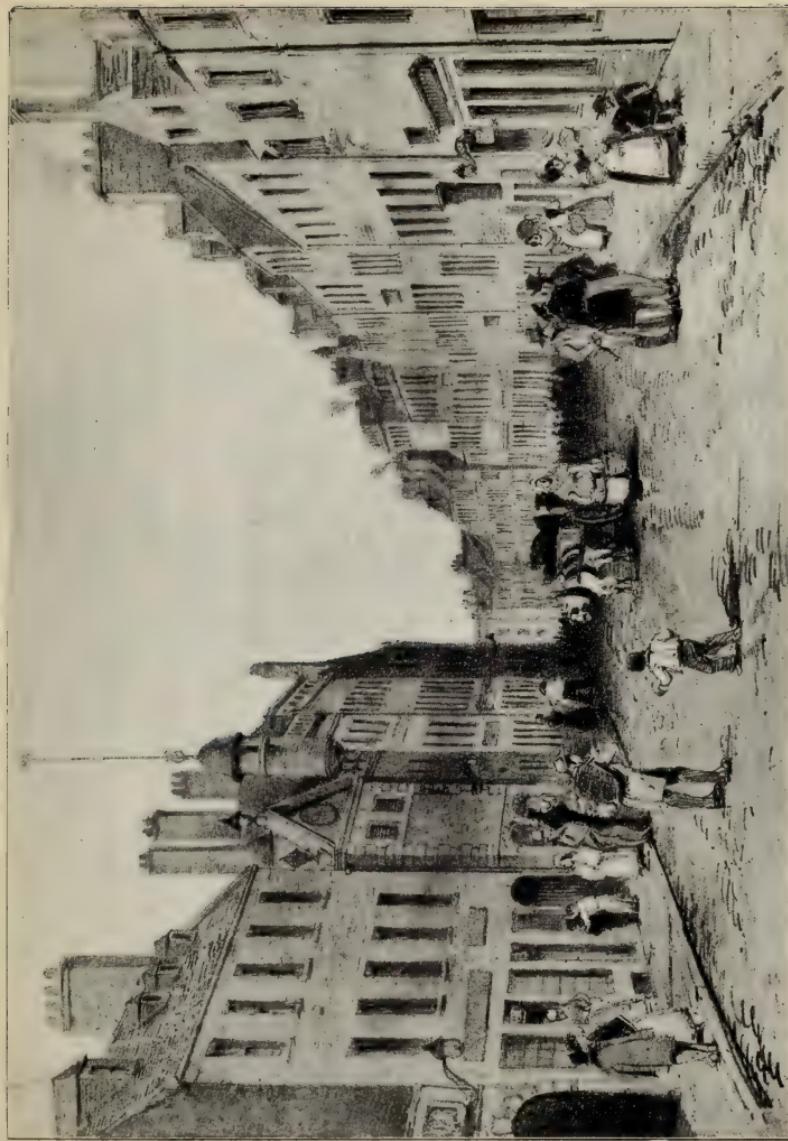
* Book of Bon-Accord, p. 117. It was once suggested to the writer by one whose refined, artistic interest in the historical associations of Aberdeen has often been expressed in connection with these researches, that the name Ghaist-Row might have some affinity with the “Street of the Holy Ghost” to be found in some Continental towns. Unfortunately, no. One thinks of the very quaint Rue de la Sainte Esprit, in Bruges, for example, leading past the half-ruinous Cathedral, where amid its picturesqueness a suspicion of the squalid, so largely associated with our own Guestrow, is not awanting; but this manner of naming streets presupposes a certain attitude of mind rarely found in the Aberdonian of those days.

the name. It is a topographical problem, of a two-fold character. Did the Guestrow and Broad Street ever form one street, and, if so, at what date—by the erection of the intervening buildings—did they become two?

On this matter, a statement of Parson Gordon, in his “Description of Both Touns,” 1661, has been hitherto accepted without question, but Parson Gordon, admirable on contemporary conditions, is, like most people, here and there open to correction, particularly on points of history and topography earlier than his own day. We have seen, in a former chapter, how defective was his information on the history of the Snow Church, and there is reason for believing that on this other point he was in error; that the Guestrow never formed part of either the Broadgate or the Gallowgate, but has all along been recognised as one of the separate and distinct streets of the burgh.

Parson Gordon’s statement on the point runs that “neerest to the Gallowgate Street is the Broadgait, or rather Broad Street, which took its name of old from its great breidth, whereas at that tyme it and the parallel lane made up bot one street, albeit now the interjected row of buildings makes them two distinct streets.”* Now, Gordon, sensible of the limits of his information, abstains from fixing any particular period at which the Broadgate and the Guestrow formed one street. He simply says “of old”—and as to that we shall return presently. Meantime, it is to be noted

* *Description of Both Touns*, p. 11.



The Old Broadgate.

that, basing on Parson Gordon's statement, other writers on the history of Aberdeen have ventured on a particular date. Thus, in a little work already quoted, the Reformation is taken as the time when the two streets were one ;* and Mr. Robbie, in his extremely interesting volume, is still more definite in putting the date at the closing years of the fifteenth century :—

“ When the monastery and kirk [of Grey Friars] were first erected [1471] they stood in a part of the town that was comparatively open, as there were no houses on the line that now forms the west side of Broad Street. The whole space from the east side of that street to the west side of Guestrow was unencumbered with buildings of any kind, so that the Broadgate was of great breadth and appropriately named.”†

In the New Statistical Account of 1845 the latest date of any was assigned at which the space was all Broadgate, and no Guestrow, namely, about the middle of the seventeenth century :—

“ Sometime previous to this [1689] (probably at the time when the disturbed state of the country rendered it unsafe to dwell without the walls), a double row of houses was erected, apparently first of wood, in the middle of the Broadgate, by which that street was reduced in breadth from about 35 paces to its present breadth of about 15 or 18 paces, and the west side of it, known by the name of the Guestrow, or as it is called in some old writings, the ‘ *vicus lemurum*,’ thus became a separate street.”‡

* Aberdeen Three Hundred Years Ago, pp. 13-18.

† Aberdeen : Its Traditions and History, p. 86.

‡ New Statistical Account, xii., p. 22.

In briefly discussing this very interesting problem it will be advisable to work backwards, so to speak, as one may thereby clear the ground and penetrate the more effectively to the region set down by Parson Gordon as "of old," and thus get, if at all possible, at the root of the story. In the first place, no time need be occupied with the statement of the New Statistical Account. It is obviously a case of the guess circumstantial, based merely on the statement of Parson Gordon, transmitted (but not adopted) by Joseph Robertson in the "Book of Bon-Accord," then recently published, and on the well-known fact that on the occasion of a disastrous fire, in 1741, among some old houses on the west side of Broad Street, the Town Council a few weeks later took special note of the circumstance that these houses were constructed of wood, and very properly prohibited the use of wood in the construction of houses in the future. Then it is clear that the two streets were not one at the period of the Reformation, in 1560. Two instances will be sufficient to show that, at that time, the Guestrow was spoken of, even in official documents, as a separate and distinct street. In a claim put before the Lord Provost and Baillies, on 1st June, 1546, by one Thomas Philipson, lately returned from Dantzig, he declared that certain parties, to whose care he had committed his goods in his absence, had despoiled him of property from "my house in the Gallogat," and "twa yeris maill [rent] of my house in the Guestraw."* The second example

* Extracts from the Council Register, Sp. Club, i., pp. 236-238.

is still more pointed, for it indicates the Guestrow both as a separate street and with various habitations, well established. The burghers of that day were not wholly concerning themselves with the great event of the Reformation. Just as now, in the period of a great political or ecclesiastical movement, they went about the ordinary affairs of life in the ordinary way ; and, just as now, neighbours fell out about their property. So it happened that the Town Council, in 1541, had to deal with a property dispute in the Guestrow, and the result is duly recorded in the Burgh Register.

“ 29th May, 1541.—The ante penult day of Maii the year forsaide, it was fundyn and determinit be the lynaris [line measurers] anence [anent] the debetis betuex Johne Henrisone Culane on tha ta partie, and Johne Nachty, twcheing thair landis liand in the Gastraw, on tha tothir partie. In the first, quhar Johne Nachty compleignes that Johne Henrysone has wrangit him makand a causay and gutter til his bakwall of his house, the quhilke sauld stand, as he saiis, forther furthe than it dois ; thai fynd that the forsaide Johne Henrysone wrangis nocht as yeit, bot efterwart when he ripis [searches] his ground forther, gine he can get ony forther document of ground he sal haue than be lynaris that resone will. Alsua, to the corbale of the vther side of Johne Henrysone’s forhaus thai fynd that it is sett to ferr [too far] in upon Johne Nachty. Item, thai fynd that the gavill of John Henrysone’s thenortir [northart] houss standis al hale upon Johne Nachty’s grond, and the wall that is on southe halfe Johne Henrysone’s nethir yheit [yett] standis upon John Nachty’s grond.” *

* Extracts from the Council Register. Sp. Club, I., p. 453.

It is thus perfectly clear that at the period of the Reformation, at any rate, the Guestrow was a clearly defined and separate street. And, of course, in the St. Nicholas Chartulary, we have a very definite entry, of date 1587, with a backward reference which of itself is conclusive as to this period, for it relates to the property between the two streets. In that year a sum of twenty-four shillings was given to St. Nicholas for a mass every Friday at the altar of St. Peter, which sum was drawn "from the land of the late same Robert, now belonging to William King, dyer, in the Gallowgate [Broadgate], on the west side thereof opposite the Greyfriars."* Then it is equally clear that the Guestrow was a separate and distinct street at the further period, when the Monastery of Greyfriars was first erected. The Town Council of that day were specially careful of the maintenance of divine service in St. Nicholas Church, and so, in 1487, "for upholding and augmentation" of the same they granted to Andro Coupar "the haile clerkshipe of the Castlegate"; and in 1488, in the same way, and for the same purpose, they granted to Richart Boyle, "thar ald servitor," the "haile clerkschipis of the Gallougate and Gastraw."† We may fairly claim to be now in the period that would qualify Parson Gordon's phrase, "of old," for we are nearly two hundred years prior to his time. But it is possible to go still further back, and it is curious that, in this matter, within certain limits, the further back we go

* Chartulary of St. Nicholas, II., p. 173.

† Extracts from the Council Register, Sp. Club, I., pp. 44-5.

the better grows the evidence. Letters of possession of certain annual rents to the Altar of St. Christopher, in St. Nicholas Church, of date 18th September, 1470, enumerate:—

“One annual rent of eight shillings from a land [house] in the foresaid Gallowgate, between the land belonging to James de Kintor and his wife on the south, and the land of Michael Blackluggis on the north, the public King’s highway on the east, and the Gastraw on the west.*

The editor of the Chartulary, Rev. Dr. Cooper, was the first to have a glimpse of the truth through this paragraph in the charters, but, still under the authority of Parson Gordon evidently, he came to the conclusion that the streets were first two, and that the widening of Broad Street took place afterwards, as in a note to the above passage in the Chartulary he says:—“This proves that the Guestrow existed as a street before that widening of the south part of the Gallowgate which gave us Broad Street.” We proceed then, and go back another decade, and find, in 1461, property specified as “now belonging to the heirs of David Paterson, lying in the street [called] the Gastrawe”; † and, again, an item of four shillings is duly entered “from the land of the late Galfrid Burnat in the Gastrawe.” ‡ One cannot go much further back, and we are now in the period when a few years mean much. But we can take one step more, of fully

* Chartulary of St. Nicholas, II., p. 41.

† Ibid., p. 48.

‡ Ibid., p. 54.

twenty years, and in 1439 we have one of the sides of the Guestrow actually specified. It occurs in a charter for the founding of an altar of St. John the Baptist in the Cathedral, and, of the date above-mentioned, duly sets forth—

“ Be it maide kende til al men . . . me Doncan of Clat burges of Aberdeen . . . oblliss for euermar me myn ayris and assigneiss my lande in the quhjlkis now I duell lyande within the said burche of Aberdeen upon the west syde of the Gastraw betwix the lande of John Henryson of Culan on the south syde on the ta part and the comon way of the Owerkyrkgate on the north syde on the tother part.”*

So, thanks to the devotional instincts of the early burghers, we reach firm ground in this matter two hundred and twenty years earlier than Parson Gordon wrote, and clearly enough, even at that early date, the Guestrow was as well established as a separate and independent street as any of the other streets of the burgh. It may be that further research will yield additional evidence, but that may be doubted, for we are now within forty years of the commencement of the admirable series of Burgh Registers which, in the earlier entries, are only fragmentary and little concerned with topographical details, while the charters of the period, both local and national, likely to touch the point, are already mostly before the public. As it stands, the evidence is definite enough that in this matter Parson Gordon spoke without authority, and that the Guestrow falls to be added to the list of the earlier streets of Aberdeen.

* *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, I., p. 239.

It would be interesting, if space allowed, to follow some of the lines of literary and historic interest that arise in connection with the Guestrow. As in the Castlegate, the Gallowgate, and the other older streets, the houses in the Guestrow, in their palmier days, had their garden ground and sheltering trees.* Several Provosts of the city had their residence there—Provost Leslie, in an early day; possibly Provost Jaffray, son-in-law of Andrew Cant, both the prisoner and the friend of Cromwell, and one of the five Scottish members of the “Barebones” Parliament; and Provost Sir George Skene, of Fintray and Rubislaw, an outstanding member of a remarkable Aberdeen family. It was in 1669 that Sir George Skene acquired certain tenements of land in the Guestrow and erected that remarkable building, No. 45, still standing—latterly used as the House of Refuge, and then the Victoria Lodging-House—that has had such a strange history. It was here that the Duke of Cumberland lodged for six weeks, in 1746, on his way to Culloden, with the plenishing of which, as with that of the neighbouring house, occupied by the widow of Gordon of Hallhead, the Duke and his retinue made such havoc.† One wonders if James

* It is curious to read, in an advertisement of property for sale, in 1794, of “Houses and offices on the west side of the Guestrow, lately possessed by the deceased Mrs. Black of Cloghill, with the large garden adjoining, which extends to Barnett’s Close on the south, and to the miln burn on the west.” *Aberdeen Journal*, 6th January, 1794. Gardens were not quite unknown, however, in the Guestrow within the last half century.

† Lest it be thought that the Duke’s residence in Guestrow was an instance of a “guest” having been lodged there, it may

Skene, the accomplished draughtsman, the devoted friend of Sir Walter Scott, to whom, it will be remembered, Scott dedicated one of the cantos of "Marmion," ever included in his sketches of the older parts of Aberdeen this interesting old property of his predecessor. But to return; this was not the only property that suffered in Aberdeen in the "Forty-Five." An Episcopal meeting-house in Blairton Lane, Guestrow, in which the small body worshipped that is now represented by the St. John's congregation, Crown Terrace, was despoiled, "the altars, pulpits, and seats were employed to heat the ovens."* The same treatment was meted out to another small body of Episcopilians who then met in Concert Court, Broad Street, now represented by the congregation of St. Andrew's. Curiously enough, that body moved shortly afterwards to a meeting-house in Guestrow, where they had as clergyman John Skinner, the future Bishop, son of the author of "Tullochgorum," and the same who "discussed the national poetry over the national

be as well to remember that he was only taken to the Guestrow when it was found that the rooms in Marischal College, at first intended for him, were not suitable. Relative to the disgraceful usage to which the family and property of Mrs. Gordon of Hallhead, who dwelt in the house adjoining Cumberland's lodging, were subjected, it seems well enough established that the person chiefly responsible was Wolfe, the future conqueror of Quebec. The identity seems to be accepted by Mr. B. W. Kelly, in his "The Conqueror of Culloden" (1903.) It reveals a despicable trait in a character that is usually presented in a very different light.

* Letter of Mrs. Gordon. Chambers's Jacobite Memoirs, p. 219.



Cumberland's Lodgings, Guestrow.

liquor" with Robert Burns in the New Inn on the occasion of the visit of Burns to Aberdeen in 1787.* The Guestrow was still of consequence as both a business and a residential quarter even well into the nineteenth century. In 1807, Major General Macdonald resided in the Guestrow, and we read of a very elegant ball that was given by him there in honour of the family of the celebrated Duchess of Gordon. The description of that event in a contemporary journal presents an amusing picture of social life in Aberdeen a century ago—

"We omitted to announce in our last week's paper that Major General Macdonald, commanding the north-eastern district, gave an elegant ball at his house in Guestrow, on the 2nd inst., to a large assemblage of the most fashionable people of this place, in honour of the birthdays of Her Grace the Duchess of Manchester, and the Most Noble the Marquis of Huntly, whose arms were elegantly emblazoned in a transparency over the supper room door. The supper room was laid out tastefully, and with the addition of the choicest wines and liquers that could be procured. Mirth and glee was the order of the night, and the party did not break up till late in the morning."†

* "On Mr. Chalmers telling him [Burns] that I was the son of 'Tullochgorum' there was no help—writes Bishop Skinner—but I must step into the inn hard by and drink a glass with him and the printer." Dean Walker's "Life and Times of John Skinner," pp. 172-3.

† *Aberdeen Journal*, 11th January, 1807. That giddy and celebrated lady and her family seem to have played a very lively part in the life of Aberdeen at that time. On one occasion they, "with a large party of fashionables," paid a visit to Devanha Brewery, where they drank the health of the proprietor in his

Then the Quakers, whose persecution in the seventeenth century, as we have already seen, forms about the most indefensible proceedings in the annals of Aberdeen, had a modest meeting-house in Guestrow in the first quarter of last century, and "Quakers' Court" may still be read above the entrance to a Guestrow Close, although that name no longer appears in the Aberdeen Directory; and the curious little building is still standing on the west side of the Guestrow which was the office of the Aberdeen Savings Bank from 1838 to 1858.* It recalls a curious phase of local history to note that the Guestrow, like St. Andrew Street, had a "Burking House," less well known than the other, because the other excited more acutely the popular ire till it was burned down in 1831. In looking back on those "Resurrection" days people can well understand how the procuring of bodies from churchyards formed a source of social trouble in Aberdeen for nearly half-a-century, but we are apt to forget that the Medical Society which did this work were so obviously under the belief that they were acting in the public interest that it is duly chronicled in the Society's minute books when own brown stout, and after three of the largest vats had been named after the Duchess of Gordon, the Duchess of Manchester, and the Marquis of Huntly, the party indulged in the dancing of Scotch reels "in the true national spirit." It was to the Duchess of Gordon that Francis Peacock dedicated his "Sketches relative to Dancing" (1805), of which, as encouragement of a worthy citizen, the Magistrates appear to have purchased a considerable stock.

* A plate illustration of the building will be found in Mr. Thomas Jaffrey's "The Aberdeen Savings Bank," p. 34.

and from what churchyard a body had been lifted and where it was placed for dissection. However, with a new and better arrangement for University anatomical work, the Guestrow "Burking House" passed quietly out of existence. In 1887, when the house that formed the Guestrow end of the Red Lion Close was taken down, the popular imagination was excited by the discovery of a quantity of bones, but these proved to be the remains of animals, and were far less significant than the stout oak timbers, laid bare on the same occasion, of a bridge that in early days spanned the burn which ran southward between the Guestrow and Broad Street. Till well into the first half of the century the Guestrow continued to be one of the business streets of Aberdeen. Many a local book and pamphlet was issued from its printing offices, as well as several of the periodical publications that were a feature of the time. But, like all the local periodicals of that day, with the brilliant exception of the "Aberdeen Magazine" of 1831-2, they were of a tone and quality that have fortunately long since passed away. The variety of businesses that were to be found in the Guestrow in the twenties and thirties of last century is quite remarkable—bakers, tailors, shoemakers, corkcutters, watch and clockmakers, turners, dentists, musical instrument makers, painters and glaziers, wrights, slaters, and boarding-house keepers. One of these tradesmen was William Milne (of Milne's Court, Gallowgate), painter and glazier, whose shop adjoined the Cumberland House. This worthy citizen, who had two sons students at

Marischal College, has left behind him a manuscript diary of the weather conditions in Aberdeen, and his own domestic cash transactions for every day of the year 1827. Once only, in the course of this curious volume, does he venture on public affairs, but, certainly, the occasion was exceptional. “16th November—Malcolm Gillespie, Excise Officer, was executed for Forgery and Arson.” But much has happened since the day of this careful citizen, and in the progress of events the Guestrow has been left behind. It is not now a desired residential quarter, and the business of Aberdeen is carried on in more spacious streets and in a different way. Yet, to-day, the Guestrow is not unpicturesque. One may thread the back courts of its more interesting buildings with something of wonder, while hoping, it may be, that in due time the authorities will find it possible to make way for larger masses of sunlight finding their way to many places that are now neither wholesome nor historic. And this, too, ought to be said, that anyone who cares to spend a leisure hour investigating its more interesting buildings will find that courtesy to strangers did not pass from the Guestrow with the Provosts and the Duke.

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